

A  
HISTORY OF  
ISLAMIC SICILY

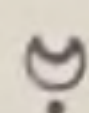
AZIZ AHMAD



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## FOREWORD

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This series of Islamic Surveys was launched about twelve years ago with the aim of 'giving the educated reader something more than can be found in the usual popular books'. The general idea was that each work should survey some part of the vast field covered by Islamic Studies, not merely presenting an outline of what was known and generally accepted, but also indicating the points at which scholarly debate continued. A bibliography, preferably annotated, was to guide the reader who wished to pursue his study further. The series has advanced more slowly than was hoped, but to judge from the reception of the volumes so far published, the general aim has been realized fairly well. We have not yet managed to include in the series all the volumes we should have liked to include, and we have added some that were not originally thought of.

The present volume covers a relatively restricted part of the field. It has seemed worth publishing it, however, since the excellence of Michele Amari's history of the Muslims of Sicily has apparently deterred other writers from embarking on the general subject, and there is no comprehensive work in English, French or German.

As in other volumes of the series, the transliteration of Arabic words is essentially that of the second edition of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (London, 1960, continuing) with three modifications. Two of these are normal with most British Arabists, namely, *q* for *k*, and *j* for *dj*. The third is something of a novelty. It is the replacement of the ligature used to show when two consonants are to be sounded together by an apostrophe to show when they are to be sounded separately. This means that *dh*, *gh*, *kh*, *sh*, *th* are to be sounded



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together; where there is an apostrophe, as in *ad'ham*, they are to be sounded separately. The apostrophe in this usage represents no sound, but, since it only occurs between two consonants (of which the second is *h*), it cannot be confused with the apostrophe representing the glottal stop (*hamza*), which never occurs between two consonants.

W. Montgomery Watt

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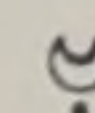
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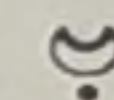
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am grateful to the Canada Council for a research grant which enabled me to collect material for the book in Europe. I am grateful to Professor William Montgomery Watt for sponsoring the volume for the *Islamic Surveys* series and for editing it. This could never have been written but for the valuable suggestions and help from Professor Francesco Gabrieli to whom I owe profound thanks. My thanks are also due to my colleagues Professor Lisa Golombek and Professor M.E. Marmura for reading chapters of the book and offering suggestions.

A. A.





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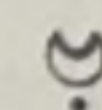




Map of Sicily and southern Italy

## ONE

### EARLY ARAB INCURSIONS



The island of Sicily, divided from Italy by the narrow strait of Messina, is almost a geographical extension of the Italian peninsula. On the other hand, it is also situated at easily navigable distance from North Africa where Islam established itself as a religion and as a state in the seventh century and where Islam remains entrenched to the present day.

Sicily can be divided into three geographical regions, the Val di Mazara, the Val di Noto and Val Demone. This division was of considerable importance during the Muslim occupation of the island. Islam became for a time the dominant religion in Val di Mazara, but there were fewer Muslims in the Val di Noto, and throughout the period the population of Val Demone remained predominantly Christian.

When the Islamic state expanded and became an empire under the second caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (634-644), Sicily and part of southern Italy were Byzantine provinces. 'Umar was opposed to military adventures across the high seas or even great rivers, but this policy was revised, if not reversed, under his successor 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (644-656). To defend the recently occupied coastal towns in Syria and in Egypt against the Byzantines, who had an effective navy, naval forces were built up by Mu'āwiya b. Abī-Sufyān, then governor of Syria, and 'Abd-Allāh b. Sa'd the governor of Egypt. Soon these naval forces played offensive as well as defensive rôles against the Byzantines in the eastern Mediterranean.

Even earlier Byzantine Sicily had indirectly felt the effect of expanding Muslim conquests for in 642-3 some refugees from Tripoli, fleeing from the occupying forces of 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ took refuge in Sicily.<sup>1</sup> But the first Arab naval incursion



took place in 652 when Mu'āwiya b. Abī-Sufyān sent his namesake Mu'āwiya b. Khudayj to raid Sicily.<sup>2</sup> Since the Syrian Arab navy was still in its infancy, this was a distant and bold venture. It has been suggested that it was planned by Mu'āwiya, as governor of Syria, for motives of prestige in his rivalry with the governor of Egypt, 'Abd-Allāh. Mu'āwiya b. Khudayj's simple flotilla reached Sicily but could not make any headway against Byzantine defences. His chief adversary in Sicily was Olympius, the exarch of Ravenna, while the Byzantine governor of North Africa, Gregory, proclaimed himself emperor and threw in his lot with the Arabs. An epidemic broke out in the army of Olympius in which he himself died; but the Arabs could not gain much success in Sicily and Ibn Khudayj returned to Syria with some booty and captives.<sup>3</sup>

The second Muslim incursion into Sicily in 667 was also an enterprise involving the two Mu'āwiyas. Mu'āwiya b. Abī-Sufyān was by now well-entrenched as undisputed caliph and founder of the Umayyad dynasty. Mu'āwiya b. Khudayj was now his governor in Egypt. The latter sent a naval expedition against Sicily under 'Abd-Allāh b. Qays who came into possession of much booty including icons of gold and silver studded with pearls; these were sent to the Umayyad caliph, who according to legend had them sent to India via Basra, to be sold at a higher price.<sup>4</sup>

With the Muslim occupation of North Africa, the Byzantine emperor Constans II left Constantinople in 662 to concentrate his attention on Byzantium's western provinces in South Italy and Sicily where he remained until his death in 668. This move was to protect the Greek mainland from being surrounded by the Arabs, which would have been the case if they had gained control of these western provinces. Constans had to face difficulties in working out this policy owing to the resistance of the Lombards in Southern Italy and to want of funds.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that the Arab incursion led by 'Abd-Allāh b. Qays took place in 668 or 669, profiting from the disorders which followed the assassination of Constans II at Syracuse in 668.<sup>6</sup>

Sicily was used as a base by the Byzantines for their attack against the Arabs at Barqa in North Africa in 681-2. During

the reign of 'Abd-al-Malik (685-705), the Arab governor of North Africa Ḥassān b. Nu'man occupied Carthage in 693-4, and Byzantine and Berber refugees from there fled to Sicily, which became once again the Byzantine staging ground for an expedition against Carthage in 697.<sup>7</sup>

In the early eighth century there were several Arab raids on Sicily, not always successful.<sup>8</sup> With the appointment as governor of North Africa of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, during whose period of office the Arab conquest of Spain took place, Arab raids on Sicily became more frequent. In 704 he sent a flotilla under his son 'Abd-Allāh to raid the Mediterranean islands, the Balearics, Sicily and Sardinia. The Sicilian part of this series of raids consisted of taking possession temporarily of a town of which we do not know the name, and gaining enormous booty, so that according to Arab accounts the share each soldier received was a hundred gold dinars. In 710 Mūsā sent another lucrative expedition against Sardinia.<sup>9</sup> There were several other minor raids on Sicily in the first two decades of the eighth century by those Arabs who had already occupied the island of Pantellaria (Cossyra) in 700. This was a pointer to the future thrust in the direction of Sicily.<sup>10</sup>

In 727 an Arab force under Bishr b. Ṣafwān raided Sicily, took a large number of captives and made a truce with the Byzantines, but the truce was not observed. Bishr's successor in Ifrīqiyya, 'Ubayda b. 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān, sent an expedition against the island in the following year under 'Uthmān b. Abī-'Ubayda, and another in 729 under Mustanīr b. al-Ḥārith. Neither of these expeditions achieved any considerable results.<sup>11</sup>

An Arab expedition from Syria raided Sicily in 730. Another expedition under 'Abd-al-Malik b. Qaṭan raided the island in 732 to seize booty and prisoners, while in the same year 'Abd-Allāh b. Ziyād made an incursion into Sardinia.

An expedition sent by 'Ubayda, the governor of Ifrīqiyya, and led by Abu-Bakr b. Suwayd in 733 lost several ships burnt by naphtha flames thrown by the Byzantine navy.

'Ubayda's successor in Egypt and North Africa, 'Ubayd-Allāh b. Ḥabḥāb sent an expedition against Sicily in 734, which was also unsuccessful and lost many prisoners to the Greeks. In 735 another expedition sent by the same governor

likely an exaggeration



raided Sardinia. This governor of Ifrīqiyya was the first Arab administrator to contemplate and attempt the conquest of Sicily. The expedition he sent in 740 under Ḥabīb b. Abī-'Ubayda, a nephew of the famous Arab general 'Uqba b. Nāfi' who had earlier raced across North Africa to the Atlantic, was a major undertaking designed to occupy Sicily. Ḥabīb temporarily occupied some part of the island, made incursions into the interior and forced Syracuse to pay tribute. The expedition had to be recalled, however, owing to the revolt of the Berber Maysara who, taking advantage of the absence of a significant part of the Arab *jund* in the Sicilian expedition, had occupied Tangier. To suppress his revolt not only was an expeditionary force despatched from Spain, but the army committed to Sicily had to be called back.<sup>12</sup>

Ḥabīb's son 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān who later seized power in North Africa sent his brother 'Abd-Allāh on an expedition against Sicily in 753. The expedition gained more success than any other Arab venture so far, but it also had to be recalled owing to Berber revolts in North Africa. 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān b. Ḥabīb's ambition to occupy Sicily and Sardinia came to naught. Constantine V sent a powerful Byzantine fleet to protect both the islands. The troubles in North Africa provided the Byzantines with the opportunity of fortifying the two islands, especially Sicily, and building up undisturbed a powerful fleet in the central Mediterranean. For nearly half a century Sicily remained safe from any significant Arab attacks.<sup>13</sup> Whereas there had been several expeditions against Sicily under the Umayyads, there were hardly any under the early 'Abbāsids, between 753 and 800. The Byzantines were also able to repair ports and construct fortresses in southern Italy, and these were used as bases against Muslim shipping in the Mediterranean. From these bases, in the second half of the eighth century, the Byzantine naval units made incursions against the coasts of Arab North Africa. It was for defence against these Byzantine attacks that Ḥarthama b. A'yān, the governor of Ifrīqiyya, built the maritime rampart at Tripoli and the *ribāṭ* (military hospice) at Monastir in 796.<sup>14</sup>

In spite of the Byzantine attacks on Muslim shipping there is reason to believe that active trade continued between Byzantine Sicily and the Arab world in this period. It is

possible that some Muslim merchants lived in Sicily. Nor was the period devoid of dramatic episodes. In 782, Elpidius, the Byzantine governor of Sicily, rose against the empress Irene, declared himself emperor, was defeated and took refuge in Muslim North Africa. Ḥārūn ar-Rashīd's envoy to Charlemagne, accompanied by an envoy from his vassal in Ifrīqiyya, Ibrāhīm b. al-Aghlab, landed at Pisa in 801 and the two Muslim envoys presented their credentials to the Frankish emperor at a camp between Vercelli and Ivrea.<sup>15</sup>

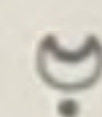
Ḥārūn ar-Rashīd had appointed Ibrāhīm b. al-Aghlab as an almost autonomous vassal in return for a tribute of 40,000 dinars per year. One of the problems Ibrāhīm b. al-Aghlab faced was that of the security of Arab trade in the Mediterranean and along the coastline of his emirate. For this purpose he concluded a peace treaty for ten years with Constantine, the Byzantine Patrician in Sicily. This treaty was not popular in Ifrīqiyya; and though the Aghlabid regime abstained for some years from raiding Byzantine shipping, its rivals, the Umayyads of Spain and the Idrīsids of Morocco raided Corsica and Sardinia between 806 and 821.<sup>16</sup>

The Aghlabid policy changed to some extent with the accession of Ibrāhīm b. al-Aghlab's son Abū-l-'Abbās 'Abd-Allāh I in 812, who at once set about building a strong navy. When this news was passed on by the Christians living in the Aghlabid dominion to the Byzantine patrician in Sicily, Byzantium strengthened its naval presence in the island. It has also been suggested that an expedition sent by Charlemagne to Sicily was intended primarily to forestall an Arab invasion. An Aghlabid flotilla was battered by a storm near Sardinia. All these factors must have contributed to the conclusion of a new peace treaty for ten years between Abū-l-'Abbās and Gregory, the Byzantine patrician of Sicily, in 813. Prisoners were exchanged, and the question of the safety of Arab merchants in Sicily and of Byzantine traders in Ifrīqiyya was also taken into account.<sup>17</sup>

The Byzantine-Aghlabid truce ended abruptly in 819-20 with an Arab expedition against Sicily commanded by Muḥammad b. 'Abd-Allāh b. al-Aghlab, a cousin of the ruling emir Ziyādat-Allāh I (817-838). The Arabs took numerous prisoners and withdrew.



## ARAB CONQUEST AND THE AGHLABID RULE



The ineffectiveness of the Arabs of North Africa against Byzantine Sicily had partly been because of the Berber revolts and partly because of the policy initiated by the emperor Constans II of developing Byzantine naval power in the eastern and central Mediterranean. Leo III abandoned this policy and degraded the naval service for political reasons, and this anti-navy policy, which was continued by his successors, was to some extent responsible for the loss of Crete and Sicily during the ninth century.<sup>1</sup>

In 826 the emperor Michael II appointed Constantine as strategus of Sicily. Soon a struggle developed between him and the Byzantine naval commander Euphemius – who had earlier raided North Africa on several occasions and taken prisoners including Arab merchants. The latter's downfall and revolt is attributed to a romantic story that he fell in love with a nun, Homoniza, and married her against her will. After an enquiry Michael II ordered Constantine to punish him by cutting off his nose. Euphemius rose in revolt and the naval units under him supported him. He occupied Syracuse and defeated Constantine, who was taken and executed. Euphemius declared himself emperor, appointed his officers in various parts of Sicily, but one of them, 'Balata' of the Arab historians, rose against him, declared his loyalty to Michael II, and defeated Euphemius, who had to approach the Aghlabid emir for intervention and support.<sup>2</sup> It is more likely that simple political ambition, encouraged by the success of the Arabs in Crete against the Byzantine navy, may have inspired Euphemius to rebel against his sovereign.<sup>3</sup>

Arriving in Ifrīqiyya Euphemius offered the suzerainty of Sicily to Ziyādat-Allāh on condition that he himself remained

governor of the island with the title of emperor but paying tribute to the Aghlabid emir; the latter was also to help him with an expeditionary force.

There was much disagreement among the notables of Cairouan (Qayrawān), some of whom regarded it as unjust to break the peace treaty with the Byzantines, while others argued that it had already been broken by the Byzantines and that Arab captives were rotting in Sicilian prisons. The matter was referred by Ziyādat-Allāh to the two famous jurists of the capital, Abū-Maḥriz Muḥammad and Asad b. al-Furāt. The former counselled collection of more precise news about Sicily, while the latter passionately advocated immediate *jihād*, and his viewpoint prevailed.<sup>4</sup>

Ziyādat-Allāh appointed the enthusiastic *qāḍī* Asad b. al-Furāt as leader of the Arab expedition. Asad had a prestigious religious background; tradition regards him as a disciple of the great jurist Abū-Ḥanīfa's two most renowned disciples Muḥammad ash-Shaybānī and Abū-Yūsuf and, anachronistically enough, the disciple of the founder of another juristic school Mālik b. Anas, but attributes to him no previous military experience of any significance. His choice by Ziyādat-Allāh seems to be in the pietistic tradition of the caliph 'Umar who chose from time to time men like Abū-'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ as commanders of the Muslim forces, more for their piety and religious seniority rather than their military skill. Apart from the choice of the commander, the Arab expedition against Sicily was well planned. The Muslim force was composed of several ethnic elements including Arabs, Berbers, Spanish Muslims from Crete and possibly some Persians. Perhaps inspired by the example of Asad b. al-Furāt, some learned men had also joined the force. According to Arab historians it consisted of 10,000 men, and seventy to a hundred vessels. In Sūs the forces of Euphemius joined it, and the allied forces sailed for Sicily in June 827. They landed at Mazara where Euphemius had some partisans. In a pitched battle the Muslim expeditionary force defeated the Byzantine army under 'Balata' who fled to Castrogiovanni and later to Calabria where he died.<sup>5</sup>

With the revolt of Euphemius and the Arab invasion of Sicily the Byzantine emperor Michael II had to divert his



attention from Crete to Sicily.<sup>6</sup> In the meantime the Muslim army under Asad b. al-Furāt made some headway. Appointing Abū-Zakī as his deputy in the captured Mazara, Asad headed towards Syracuse across the island. In his route the Byzantines faced him at Acra (now Palazzolo Acreide). Here some Byzantine representatives from Syracuse met him and offered to pay tribute. This was a ruse. Actually, the Byzantines were feverishly fortifying Syracuse and other fortresses, and transporting the treasures of churches to fortified strong points. Euphemius, whose ambitions had been frustrated, was now secretly in league with the Byzantines and urging them to resist the Arabs. After their fortifications were strengthened, the Byzantines of Syracuse refused to pay Asad the tribute they had promised.

Asad tried to besiege Syracuse. Though he had eight or nine thousand men under his command at this juncture, he had no siege machines and no large vessels necessary for capturing a strongly fortified city like Syracuse. The Greeks had taken all the cattle and the food available in the area close to their fortifications. Soon the Arab army was reduced to eating its own horses. There was a mutiny headed by one, Ibn-Qadīm, who urged Asad to give up the siege and to return to Ifriqiyya. The mutiny was suppressed and Asad had Ibn-Qadīm whipped. The Arab blockade and siege of Syracuse continued, and Asad, besides receiving some reinforcements from Ifriqiyya, was joined by Arab adventurers from Crete. The besieged Byzantines also received reinforcements sent by Michael II, and the latter also succeeded in persuading the Venetian doge Giustiniano Partecipazio to send a naval force against the Arab invaders. The siege lasted for almost a year. Syracuse proposed a truce which the Arabs rejected. The situation of the besieged was critical, but luckily for them an epidemic broke out in the Arab camp and Asad b. al-Furāt was one of the victims.<sup>7</sup>

Though Asad had been in control of the Arabs in Sicily for only a year, he had managed to establish a firm foothold on the island, and this was to expand over a period of time into the conquest of the whole of Sicily.

On the death of Asad b. al-Furāt the Arab army chose Muḥammad b. Abī-l-Jawārī as their leader without waiting

for an appointment by the Aghlabid emir. Weakened by disease and frustrated by stiff Byzantine resistance the Arabs decided to raise the siege of Syracuse and to sail back to North Africa, but found their way barred by the Byzantine and Venetian fleets. They therefore turned back, burnt their boats to prevent them from falling into enemy hands, and moved inland. They first occupied Mineo, situated at a day's march from Syracuse towards the north-west, and later took by storm the important town of Girgenti. They then arrived in front of Castrogiovanni, the most formidable natural fortress in the island.

At Castrogiovanni a drama had taken place. Its inhabitants, pretending to submit to Euphemius and to acknowledge him as their emperor, had overpowered and assassinated him. The Byzantine general Theodotus tried to face the Arabs outside Castrogiovanni but was repulsed, and took refuge in the fortress. The siege continued. The Arabs were by now so secure in the conquered areas that they minted money in the names of Ziyādat-Allāh and Muḥammad b. Abī-l-Jawārī. The latter, however, died during the siege of Castrogiovanni, and the army chose Zuhayr b. al-Ghawth as his successor. In a surprise sortie Theodotus massacred a thousand Muslims, seized the initiative and besieged the besiegers who suffered severe casualties but managed to withdraw and take refuge at Mineo; there they were faced with famine. Meanwhile the Muslim garrison of Girgenti sacked that town, evacuated it and left for Mazara. Thus in 829, at the end of the first phase of their invasion, only Mineo and Mazara, situated on the opposite sides of the island, were left to the Arabs.<sup>8</sup>

The emperor Michael II died in 829, and was succeeded by Theophilus (829–842), in the early years of whose reign the Byzantines suffered severe reverses in Sicily. In 830 reinforcements were sent to the Arabs in the island by Ziyādat-Allāh. In the same year Aṣbagh b. Wakīl, a scion of the Berber tribe of Hawwāra and a soldier of fortune, landed in Sicily with a band of followers from Spain. At this juncture the residue of the original Muslim force was hard pressed, for the patrician Theodotus had been besieging Mineo for almost a year. The Spaniards joined forces with the Aghlabid army on condition that Aṣbagh be accepted as their common



commander. The total strength of the two Arab fleets was about 300 vessels, and there must have been between 20,000 and 30,000 men. Supplied with horses, Aṣḡagh marched to the rescue of the Arabs of Mineo; Theodotus was killed and the Byzantine army took refuge in the stronghold of Castrogiovanni. Having sacked and burnt Mineo, Aṣḡagh then reached a township which the Arab historians call Ghalwāliya, and which has been identified as Calloniana. A pestilence broke out in the Arab army at this stage, however, and Aṣḡagh died. The siege of the town was lifted. The Byzantines counter-attacked the Spanish Arabs who suffered severe losses but reached their boats and departed for Spain. Some of the Spanish Muslims, however, remained in Sicily, and joined the Aghlabid force in its siege of Palermo.<sup>9</sup>

The defeat and departure of the force from Spain did not demoralise the Aghlabid army which had marched from Mazara in August 830 to besiege Palermo. After a year of siege the Byzantine governor of the city surrendered on 12 September 831. The Arab foothold in Sicily had now expanded to become a considerable territory, with Palermo as capital, and the Arabs were well placed to set about the conquest of the rest of the island. Two years passed, however, without any major offensive against the remaining Byzantine possessions.<sup>10</sup> At the time of the capture of Palermo the seat of the patrician and the Byzantine administration in Sicily had been transferred from Syracuse to the impregnable fortress of Castrogiovanni.<sup>11</sup>

In 832, five months after the conquest of Palermo, Ziyādat-Allāh appointed his cousin Abū-Fihr Muḡammad b. 'Abd-Allāh as the *wālī* of Sicily. This appointment of an Aghlabid prince could have been motivated by two considerations. One of these was to anticipate any attempt by the Spanish Arab adventurers, who had come with Aṣḡagh, to annex the island to Umayyad Spain or to set up an independent state as in the case of Crete. The other consideration could have been to strengthen Sicily's attachment to Aghlabid Ifrīqiyya. In Sicily, however, the Spanish element became integrated with the North African,<sup>12</sup> while even with the appointment of Abū-Fihr the dependence of Arab Sicily on the Aghlabids remained nominal, and it conducted its affairs with a great measure of

autonomy. The coinage struck in Sicily in 835, however, bore the name of the Aghlabid ruler Ziyādat-Allāh.<sup>13</sup>

In 834 Abū-Fihr led an expedition against Castrogiovanni and inflicted losses on the Byzantine force, which took refuge in the fortress. In 835 he made two other incursions into Byzantine territory. In the second of these he captured many prisoners, including many women and a son of the Byzantine patrician. He sent a detachment under one Muḡammad b. Sālīm against Taormina; but at this juncture a revolt broke out in the main Arab army. The rebels killed Abū-Fihr and took refuge with the Byzantines.<sup>14</sup>

After the assassination of Abū-Fihr, Ziyādat-Allāh sent Faḡl b. Ya'qūb as the temporary governor of Sicily, under whom two incursions were made against the Byzantines, one in the region of Syracuse, and the other in that of Castrogiovanni. This appointment was, however, a stop-gap arrangement; and after a few months the Aghlabid ruler appointed Abū-Fihr's brother Abū-l-Aghlab Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd-Allāh as the governor of the island. Ibrāhīm was a person of great wisdom and political insight. He realised that the foremost logistic problem for the continuation of the Muslim conquest in Sicily was to build a navy with incendiary units that could hold its own against the Byzantine fleet. His new navy made an incursion on the Byzantine-held coast and seized several prisoners; another of his naval units landed at Pantellaria.<sup>15</sup>

In the meantime his land forces made two incursions into the environs of mount Etna in 835 and 836 and captured so many prisoners that the price of slaves fell.<sup>16</sup> An Arab raid against the mountain fortress of Castelluccio was initially successful, but was later repulsed by the Byzantines. About the same time a naval unit commanded by Faḡl b. Ya'qūb ravaged the Eolian islands and took some fortresses, including Tindaro. In 837 Abū-l-Aghlab sent an expedition against Castrogiovanni under 'Abd-as-Salām b. 'Abd-al-Wahhāb. The Arabs entered the city and took enormous booty, but could not take the citadel; a truce was arrived at, and the Arab expedition left the city and returned to Palermo.<sup>17</sup>

In 837 the Armenian Alexis Mousélē, the son-in-law of Theophilus, was appointed Byzantine governor of Sicily; but he was soon accused of treason and of intrigues with the



Arabs, and was recalled to Constantinople.<sup>18</sup> In 838 the Arabs besieged the stronghold of Cefalu, situated forty-eight miles east of Palermo; but Byzantine reinforcements arrived and they had to lift the siege.

On 11 June 838, the Aghlabid emir Ziyādat-Allāh I died and was succeeded by his brother Abū-ʿIqāl al-Aghlab b. Ibrāhīm (838–841). Fresh reinforcements were sent to Sicily. During 840 the towns of Platani, Caltabellotta, Corleone, and possibly also Marineo and Geraci came to terms with the Arabs and surrendered. In 840–1 there was again a raid in the neighbourhood of Castrogiovanni. By the end of the reign of Theophilus (842) the Arabs of Sicily had fully occupied the Val di Mazara and forged an alliance with Naples which lasted for almost half a century.<sup>19</sup> In 842–3 the Arabs transferred their activity to the eastern part of the island; and with help from Naples occupied Messina. With the capture of that port, they gained control of the Strait of Messina, and, as they already controlled the stretch of sea between Sicily and Ifriqiyya, they were able to prevent the Byzantine fleet from entering the western Mediterranean.<sup>20</sup> In 845 the Arab forces pressed against the Val di Noto and occupied Modica. In 846–7, Faḍl b. Jaʿfar, the conqueror of Messina, occupied Lentini.<sup>21</sup> In 845, the empress Theodora, after concluding peace with the Arabs in the east, tried to improve the Byzantine position in Sicily and sent reinforcements from the distant theme of Charsianon, but these were defeated by the Arabs near Butera with heavy losses.<sup>22</sup> In 847–8 the Byzantines made an unsuccessful attempt to land at Mondello, eight miles from Palermo. In 848 there was a severe famine in Sicily, and it was probably because of this famine that Ragusa in the south-east of the island surrendered to the Arabs on humiliating terms. The inhabitants gave up all their belongings to the victors who, as they retired, razed the walls of the city to the ground.<sup>23</sup> In 849–50 the Arabs penetrated into the town, but not the fortress, of Castrogiovanni and after setting it on fire returned to Palermo.<sup>24</sup>

Abū-l-Aghlab died on 17 January 851 after sixteen years of governorship. He was one of the ablest of Muslim administrators in Sicily, yet never marched out of Palermo leading an army. But he had two loyal and able lieutenants and

generals, the most eminent of whom, Faḍl b. Jaʿfar, continued the war of conquest, occupied the whole of the Val di Mazara, and made considerable headway in the rest of the island, so that only those Christian towns in the island which paid tribute to the Muslims could feel secure.<sup>25</sup>

On his death Abū-l-Aghlab was succeeded by ʿAbbās b. Faḍl, a man of fierce character with an established reputation as a military commander. He was chosen by the Arabs of Sicily as their leader, and later confirmed by the Aghlabid emir Muḥammad I (841–856). In 852 ʿAbbās raided Caltavuturo, in the northern part of the island, and took many prisoners. This was followed in 852–3 by raids in the neighbourhood of other important towns including Catania, Syracuse and Noto. In 853 he besieged Butera for five months and took a large number of prisoners who were enslaved. Such slaves taken in war were used for agricultural labour in the Val di Mazara. During 857–8 the Arabs further ravaged the areas close to Syracuse, Taormina and other Byzantine towns. In 858 the fortress of Cefalu capitulated to the Arabs; its inhabitants were allowed to depart but the fortifications were destroyed. In January 859 ʿAbbās at last occupied the fortress of Castrogiovanni, the Byzantine capital of Sicily. Enormous booty was obtained and the sons and daughters of the Byzantine nobility were taken into captivity. ʿAbbās had a mosque built in the city. Some of the prisoners and spoils of war were sent to Ifriqiyya, and thence to the court of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Mutawakkil (847–61) in Baghdad.<sup>26</sup>

The fall of Castrogiovanni led Michael III to despatch a strong fleet of 300 *chelandia* under the command of Constantine Kondomytēs, which reached Syracuse in the autumn of 869. With the arrival of the Byzantine fleet several Sicilian fortresses including Avola, Platani, Caltabellotta and Caltavuturo, which had earlier submitted to the Arabs rose against them. In a pitched naval battle the Arabs inflicted a disastrous defeat on the Byzantines who lost a hundred *chelandia*. ʿAbbās then marched against the combined army of the fortresses that had revolted and defeated it near Cefalu. From that he turned his attention to colonising Castrogiovanni with Muslims and strengthening its fortifications; but in 861 returning from a successful expedition in the neighbourhood of Syracuse, he



fell ill and died and was buried at Caltagirone. As the Arab army departed, the Byzantines dug up and burnt his corpse.<sup>27</sup> He was one of the most brilliant Arab governors of the island.

The Arabs of Sicily chose his uncle Aḥmad b. Ya'qūb as their governor. This choice was ratified by the emir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad; but the Arabs of Sicily themselves deposed their new governor after a few months and instead chose the late 'Abbās's son 'Abd-Allāh. This choice was not approved by the Aghlabid emir, who appointed Khafāja b. Sufyān to the post.<sup>28</sup> He arrived in Palermo in 862. In the same year Khafāja's son Maḥmūd raided the neighbourhood of Syracuse, but was repulsed and returned to Palermo. In 863 Ziyādat-Allāh II succeeded his brother Aḥmad as emir in Ifrīqiyya and confirmed Khafāja in the governorship of Sicily.

In 864 the Arabs occupied the important and rich city of Noto, and later Scicli, situated in the south-eastern angle of the island. In 865 an Arab expedition advanced nearly to Syracuse, but Khafāja's son Muḥammad was ambushed by the Byzantines and lost a thousand men.<sup>29</sup> In the following year Khafāja again led an expedition against Syracuse, but met with no success, except that he occupied Troina. Near Etna a delegation from Taormina met him for peace talks. He sent his wife and his son Muḥammad to negotiate a treaty with the citizens of that city; but the treaty concluded was soon broken and Muḥammad was appointed by his father to chastise Taormina.<sup>30</sup> Noto also revolted against the Arabs and was reoccupied. Ragusa was likewise forced to surrender again by a treaty which left a section of the population free and in possession of its property, while those who had resisted the Arabs were taken captive with their possessions and livestock.<sup>31</sup> In 867 Khafāja raided the neighbourhoods of Catania and Syracuse. Now, the Arab columns were active throughout Sicily.<sup>32</sup>

In 868 the emperor Basileus sent a strong naval force to engage the Muslims in Sicily. Khafāja's son Muḥammad inflicted a crushing defeat on the Byzantines near Syracuse, but was unable to take the city. He also failed to recapture Taormina in 869. The same year Syracuse was again besieged by Khafāja unsuccessfully. On his return to Palermo he was

assassinated by a Berber, and his son Muḥammad was confirmed as his successor.

In 869 Malta was occupied by an Arab force from Ifrīqiyya commanded by an Aghlabid prince Aḥmad b. 'Umar. A Byzantine counter-offensive failed to recover that island because of the reinforcements sent from Sicily by Muḥammad b. Khafāja.<sup>33</sup> The latter was assassinated by the eunuchs of his palace in 871, and the Sicilian Arab notables chose one Muḥammad b. Abī-Ḥusayn as his successor; but this choice was rejected by the Aghlabid emir Abū-l-Gharānīq Muḥammad II (863-75) who appointed Rabāḥ b. Ya'qūb as governor. This last, however, died in the same year; and in 873 Abū-l-Gharānīq appointed to the command of the island his kinsman Abū-l-'Abbās b. 'Abd-Allāh, a cultivated person, well-versed in literature, a poet and a traditionist.<sup>34</sup> He was replaced in the same year by another Aghlabid prince Abū-Mālik Aḥmad.

The terrible emir, Ibrāhīm II b. Aḥmad (875-902), who had succeeded his brother Abū-l-Gharānīq, appointed Ja'far b. Muḥammad to the governorship of the island, and his achievement was to ravage the areas close to Rametta, Taormina and Catania and to besiege Syracuse. During the half century between the first siege of Syracuse by Asad b. al-Furāt in 827 and this siege by Ja'far in 877, the population of Syracuse had been much reduced by war, by pestilence and by emigration to more secure Byzantine possessions.<sup>35</sup> In this siege the citizens of Syracuse were so hard pressed that they were reduced to cannibalism, eating the corpses of the dead. The emperor Basileus sent reinforcements under Admiral Adrian, and for a time Ja'far had to lift the siege and return to Palermo. In the spring of 878, however, the siege was again resumed by the Arabs under Abū-'Isā b. Muḥammad b. Qurhub with renewed vigour. On 21 May 878 Syracuse was occupied by the Arabs. The story of this ancient Byzantine city's fall, the massacre of its inhabitants, the looting of its riches, the destruction of its fortifications and the sack and arson of its quarters has been narrated graphically by the monk Theodosius.<sup>36</sup>

In the same year, shortly after the capture of Syracuse, Ja'far b. Muḥammad was killed in a palace conspiracy in which two Aghlabid princes were involved. His successor Ḥusayn b. Rabāḥ made an unsuccessful drive in the direction of Taormina



in 879. He was succeeded by Ḥasan b. 'Abbās who in 881 vigorously attempted to overrun what remained of Byzantine Sicily, advancing first in the direction of Catania, then in that of Taormina.<sup>37</sup> During 881 and 882 the Muslims won several victories, but suffered one disastrous defeat at the hands of the Byzantines near Caltavuturo.<sup>38</sup> In the wake of this defeat Ḥasan b. 'Abbās was replaced by Muḥammad b. Faḍl who tried to lead or send expeditions to almost every part, where the Christians had so far not surrendered. The regions of Catania, Taormina and Rametta bore the brunt during 882 and 883 but could not be subdued. In 885, the new governor Sawāda b. Muḥammad b. Khafāja led an offensive in the direction of Taormina, but failed to take that town. In 886–7 civil war broke out between the Arabs and the Berbers. The rebels sent Sawāda back to North Africa and elected one Abū-'Abbās b. 'Alī as their governor; but Ibrāhīm II despatched Sawāda with a strong force to subdue the rebels in the island, which he did. In 889–90 Sawāda again undertook an unsuccessful siege of Taormina. All was not well in the Muslim camp. The Muslims of Sicilian origin were rising against the governor and the new troops which had come from Ifriqiyya. This uprising lasted from 889 to 894. In 891 Sawāda was recalled and Muḥammad b. Faḍl once again appointed governor to bring the situation under control. Between 892 and 896 the Arabs in Sicily could make no significant advances against the Byzantine-held territory. Again in 898 there was internecine conflict between the Arabs and the Berbers.

Ibrāhīm II appointed Aḥmad b. 'Umar, a man of Aghlabid blood to the command of Sicily, but throughout 899 the civil strife continued. As Aḥmad proved incapable of bringing the situation under control, Ibrāhīm II sent his own son 'Abd-Allāh, who had won renown for suppressing rebellions in Ifriqiyya, at the head of a powerful force to restore order in the island.<sup>39</sup> The internal discord in Arab Sicily was taken advantage of by the local Christian population of Val Demone, some of whom asserted their independence. The Byzantines had sent reinforcements to Taormina and Reggio. In a counter-attack 'Abd-Allāh b. Ibrāhīm stormed Reggio, across the Strait of Messina, in June 901 and carried the war to the Italian mainland.<sup>40</sup>

In 902 Ibrāhīm II, suspected by some historians of being mentally disturbed,<sup>41</sup> abdicated from the high position of emir of Ifriqiyya and was succeeded by his son 'Abd-Allāh II, whom he replaced in the command of Sicily with the intention of personally leading the holy war against the Christians. During Ibrāhīm's determined siege of Taormina, which led to its capture, the Byzantine garrison, losing all hope, slipped away by sea. Byzantine commanders, including the Lord High Admiral Eustathius Argyrus, have been accused by some Byzantine historians of criminal negligence, and even downright treachery, though Eustathius was soon restored to favour by the emperor Leo IV.<sup>42</sup> After the capture of Taormina, Ibrāhīm had its population cruelly massacred and the city was set on fire.<sup>43</sup> Ibrāhīm then moved to subdue the rest of Val Demone. He sent various expeditions under his kinsmen and other commanders which reduced Mico, Aci and Rametta. He himself crossed the Strait of Messina for a raid into Calabria, and died while besieging Cosenza in 902. His death was hailed in Italy as a Divine deliverance.<sup>44</sup>

By 902 practically the whole of Sicily was in Muslim hands. The Muslim conquest of the island thus took nearly three-quarters of a century.

Under the Aghlabids the direction of the Arab conquest was from west to east, from Mazara and Palermo eastward. The Arabs fought with varying fortunes for four years until 831. During the next ten years, 831 to 841, they strengthened their hold on the Val di Mazara where they founded their first colonies and transplanted slaves who worked on their agricultural holdings. During the next eighteen years, 841 to 859 they subdued with much harder effort the fertile Val di Noto. From 860 onwards they seriously undertook the final phase of the conquest, that of the Val Demone, which they finally succeeded in occupying in 902.<sup>45</sup>

Exhausted by the civil wars of the eight-eighties Arab Sicily remained quiet during the last seven years of the Aghlabid rule, 903–9, during which period it was ruled by five governors, the last of whom Aḥmad b. Abī-Ḥusayn persecuted the Christians of the island.<sup>46</sup>

Only the Strait of Messina divided Sicily from southern Italy, and it was natural that the spearhead of the Arab



offensive should penetrate the southern provinces of the peninsula several times during the period of Aghlabid rule. It is thus appropriate at this point to study in some detail the Arab activity on the Italian mainland. After the Arabs had occupied about a third of Sicily, the Republic of Naples allied itself with them against the Lombards of Benevento (832-839). This was the first encounter of the Lombards with the Arabs on the mainland. Allied with the Neapolitans the Arabs attacked the Adriatic coast of Italy. They temporarily occupied Brindisi in 838, beating the Venetian fleet, and advanced along the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian coasts of Italy.<sup>47</sup>

In 840 the Arabs of Sicily made another incursion in the Adriatic in the region of Istria. They sacked and burnt Osero in the island of Cherso. Emperor Theophilus appealed to the Venetians for help, and they sent a fleet of sixty ships for the relief of Taranto. This fleet was surprised and defeated by the Arabs who advanced further into the Adriatic as far as Ancona which they sacked and burnt. They finally reached the mouth of the Po, near Adria, but could not make much headway.

On the way back they inflicted further losses on the remnants of the Venetian fleet and entrenched themselves in Taranto.<sup>48</sup>

With the capture of Taranto, the Adriatic was more exposed to the Arab fleets. In 841 the dynast of Benevento, Radelchis, appealed to the Arabs for help against his adversary Sikenolf, through Pandon, the governor of Bari. The Arabs quickly accepted the invitation and took possession of Bari. Sikenolf appealed to the Arabs of Crete against their co-religionists of Sicily and Radelchis, but without much result.<sup>49</sup>

Byzantine naval power revived in the second half of the ninth century under the Macedonian dynasty, and they were able to regain some of their lost possessions in southern Italy. Between 841 and 866 there was no significant Arab penetration of the Adriatic, though the Arabs remained in possession of Bari and Brindisi. Warlike Maradites were settled by the Byzantine government in the new themes of Cephallenia and Dyrrhachium as a check against Arab bases in southern Italy.<sup>50</sup> This, however, did not stop Arab activity in other Italian theatres of war. In 845 a rift developed between the Arabs and their Neapolitan allies over the island of Ponza and the Arab bridgehead in the southern part of the Gulf of Salerno.

The Arabs were expelled from their positions when elements from Amalfi, Gaeta and Sorrento supported the Neapolitans. The Arabs counter-attacked and occupied Miseno.<sup>51</sup>

In 846 the Arabs appeared at the mouth of the Tiber and approached Rome. Though earlier popes had foreseen the Arab danger, and Gregory IV (827-844) had fortified the mouth of the Tiber and constructed a fortress at Ostia, the Arab fleet was able to force its way past Ostia, and an Arab force marched towards Civitavecchia, while another vanquished the papal garrison at Nova Ostia. This was not a major, or even a planned invasion, but just an adventurous incursion on a large scale, attracted by the fame of the wealth of the holy city. The great church of St Peter was pillaged and suffered damage, an event which saddened the whole of Christendom.<sup>52</sup> Either the Arabs did not seriously try to take Rome, however, or the Romans defended themselves successfully, for the Arabs turned south towards Benevento, sacked Fondi and besieged Gaeta. Louis (the future emperor) arrived in southern Italy to fight the Arabs and was joined by Cesare, the son of the Consul of Naples. The Arabs defeated Louis and made peace with Cesare, but on the way back their fleet was dispersed and destroyed by a severe storm. A large number of Arabs were made captive, brought to Rome and put to forced labour for the construction of the fortifications of the Vatican City.<sup>53</sup> Before the middle of the ninth century all the coasts of southern Italy from Siponto in the east to the mouth of the Tiber in the west had been invaded by bands of Arabs converging from various points in the Mediterranean. These invasions led to the establishment of durable footholds which became centres of piracy.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the efforts of the Frankish emperor Louis II and the Lombard princes, Apulia remained in Arab occupation from 849 to 866. This occupation was based on a Taranto-Bari axis. At Bari Mufarraǵ b. Sallām asserted his independence, occupied forty-eight fortresses in Apulia and raided Neapolitan territory. In 851-2 the Arabs of Bari ravaged Calabria and threatened Benevento and Salerno. Louis II's first siege of Bari was not successful. In 858 the Arabs of Bari raided the territory of Benevento again, and a new Frankish army, which came to that city's help was defeated. The Arabs penetrated Cam-



pagna and devastated the suburbs of Naples. They occupied Venafro and the valley of the Volturno. In 859 Prince Adelchis of Benevento had to pay them tribute. In 866 Louis II made another effort to deal with the Arabs of Bari, but, though he occupied Matera, Venosa and Canosa, he again failed to take Bari.<sup>55</sup>

Towards the end of the reign of the Byzantine emperor Michael III, in 866, the Arabs sailed up the Adriatic and besieged Ragusa on the Dalmatian coast for fifteen months. The city was saved by a fleet of 100 vessels commanded by Nicetas Oryphas. The Byzantine emperor Basil I entered into a treaty of alliance with Louis II who was striving to push the Arabs out of Apulia, and in 869 sent a fleet of 400 vessels to his help.<sup>56</sup> The siege of Bari by Louis in that year, however, was again unsuccessful; and the 'sultan' of Bari raided Apulia as far as Gargano. In 871, however, Louis finally succeeded in occupying Bari and depriving the Arabs of that powerful base on the mainland.<sup>57</sup>

The Aghlabid emir Abū-l-Gharāniq, who had appointed Rabāh b. Ya'qūb as governor of Sicily, also appointed his brother 'Abd-Allāh as governor of the Muslim possessions in southern Italy. Landing at Taranto in 871 he sent expeditions in several directions. He himself besieged Salerno, but died in the course of operations. The siege continued for some time after his death, and was raised only in 872 when the Arab forces had to fall back on Calabria. The Lombards who had taken Louis II prisoner, restored him to freedom in face of Arab danger.<sup>58</sup> Though he departed from southern Italy and died in 875, it was due to his counter-offensive that the Muslims were prevented from conquering a sizeable part of Italy.

After 872 the Arabs led offensives in various directions and three times Prince Adelchis of Benevento and his Lombard troops faced them unsuccessfully. In 875, after the death of Louis II, a Muslim fleet, either from Sicily or Crete, made a voyage up the Adriatic as far as Grado, and on its way back set fire to Comacchio. New reinforcements under 'Uthmān, the commander in Taranto, raided the environs of Benevento, and occupied the towns of Teleso and Alife in the valley of the Volturno. The Lombards asked for Byzantine help, but

Adelchis feared Byzantine tutelage and came to terms with the Arabs. The Byzantines, nevertheless, succeeded in occupying Bari. After 875 one can distinguish two different series of Muslim military activities in southern Italy. In the gulf of Taranto they were on the defensive against the Byzantines; but in the gulfs of Salerno, Naples and Gaeta they still had the initiative. In 876 Arab bands again wrought desolation in the neighbourhood of Rome. Even as late as 880 Atanasio, the bishop of Naples, invited an Arab force to come to his aid, and when this led to havoc in southern Italy Pope John VIII had to pronounce an anathema against him. The pope had earlier detached Amalfi, Capua and Salerno from their alliances with the Arabs; and in 881 Naples also yielded to his pressure. In the same year, however, the Arabs of Sepino, in alliance with Count Guy of Spoleto, overran the towns of Isernia and Bojano, and occupied once more the high valley of the Volturno.<sup>59</sup>

In the meantime in 880 a strong Byzantine force occupied Taranto. Between 881 and 886 Byzantine suzerainty was reasserted over the whole of Calabria and a part of Apulia. The Byzantine reoccupation of Calabria, apart from the valley of Crati, took place after 883 with the campaigns of Nicephorus Phocas. The Arabs of Agropoli and Garigliano, with the help of Naples, fought against the Byzantines at Santa Severina and ravaged the territory of Guaimar. The Prince of Salerno appealed for help to the Byzantines and accepted their suzerainty. In 888-9 the Arabs of Sicily battered a Byzantine fleet near Reggio, from which the inhabitants fled in panic; but the Byzantine admiral counter-attacked and took prisoner the Arab commander, Mujbir b. Ibrāhīm.<sup>60</sup>

As we have seen, the last Arab attacks on south Italy during Aghlabid times were led by the Aghlabid prince 'Abd-Allāh who sacked Reggio in 901 and by his father, the ex-emir Ibrāhīm II who died while besieging Cosenza in 902. In contrast to the gradual occupation of Sicily, the Arab incursions into southern Italy and their settlements there do not reveal any definite plan or policy of permanent conquest, and were largely military and naval adventures.

Sicily under the Aghlabids was inhabited by a mixture of many different peoples, races and religious persuasions,



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Sicily under the Aghlabids was inhabited by a mixture of many different peoples, races and religious persuasions,



Sicilians, Christian and Muslim, Greeks, Lombards, Jews, Arabs, Berbers and even some Persians and Negroes. The Arabs formed the ruling élite. Next in importance and in turbulence were the Berbers, who had played a considerable rôle in the conquest of the island. They were especially numerous at Girgenti and in certain parts of Val di Mazara, and from time to time rose against the Arabs in civil strife.<sup>61</sup>

The Christians who formed the majority of the island's population can be divided into four categories, those who remained more or less independent, those who paid tribute, the vassals and the slaves. While Byzantine resistance lasted, the Christians of independent areas acknowledged Byzantine suzerainty. The tributary Christian communities who had treaties with the Arab state paid *jizya* or *kharāj* to it. Usually the tributary treaties were signed for ten year periods. The remaining Christian population or 'vassals', who lived in the areas directly administered by the Muslims, were regarded as *dhimmīs* (protected minorities) and had the same obligations and privileges as the protected minorities in other parts of the world of Islam in that age. Their personal disputes were decided among themselves by their own law, though in disputes where one of the two parties was a Muslim, Muslim law was applied. They had security of property and freedom of worship, but they could not speak irreverently of the Qur'ān or the Prophet or Islam, nor could they insult a Muslim woman or convert a Muslim to Christianity. The fourth class of Christians, the slaves, consisted of three categories; those taken prisoner in war or raids, those who were sold by Christians or Muslims as slaves, and the agricultural labourers.<sup>62</sup>

The Christian population of Sicily which lived under the Muslims felt less aggrieved than that which lived on the mainland under the Lombards or the Franks. Christian slaves often accepted Islam in the hope of better treatment or manumission. In Val di Mazara where slaves abounded, Islamisation progressed swiftly. On the other hand in Val di Noto during the century from about 850 to about 950 Christianity remained firmly entrenched. Val Demone remained overwhelmingly Christian until the Norman Conquest. Nevertheless, during the tenth and the eleventh centuries under the Kalbites, the

Muslims came to form a sizeable percentage of the population of the island.<sup>63</sup>

Under the Aghlabids the Arab governor of Sicily, who was known by the designation of *amīr* or *wālī* or *ṣāhib*, enjoyed great freedom. He made war or peace according to his own decision, and divided the booty of war. The coins struck in Sicily in the early phase bear the names of the governor of Sicily and the ruling Aghlabid emir; but the later coins bear the names of the Aghlabid rulers only. This might indicate that, while the earlier governors minted coins in Sicily, later coins were minted in North Africa, and thence brought into the island.<sup>64</sup> In the Friday *khutba* (sermon) the name of the Aghlabid emir was read together with that of the 'Abbāsid caliph in Baghdad.

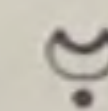
Government and administrative departments were exactly of the same pattern and structure as those departments in other Muslim lands in that age. There were also the same kind of municipal bodies, as in North Africa. A municipal body was called a *jamā'a* and consisted of the heads of noble families, jurists, wealthy citizens and heads of the guilds of craftsmen. The *jamā'a* contributed by money or service to the construction and repair of aqueducts, wells and mosques, and also helped indigent travellers.<sup>65</sup> Taxation was lower than under the Byzantines. The tax on draught animals, which had earlier hindered agriculture was removed; and a land tax system was introduced which made it disadvantageous to leave cultivable land uncultivated.<sup>66</sup>

Land property in Aghlabid Sicily was of four kinds; first the property that fully belonged to a Muslim before his conversion, by grant or by cultivation; secondly the property fully belonging to a non-Muslim on which he paid *kharāj*; thirdly the property bound by perpetual payment of *kharāj*, irrespective of whether it belonged to a Muslim or a non-Muslim; and fourthly the state property which was pronounced inalienable. The Muslim occupation brought about profound changes in the constitution and distribution of rural property in Sicily. An *iqṭā'* or land grant system was introduced for the benefit of the army. The land left by the Christians or taken from them, became the property of the state, and was assigned to the corps of the Arab *jund* (army) in various parts.



The various groupings of the *jund* divided themselves into civil and military sections, as they moved away from the capital and settled down in various towns and fortresses close to their landholdings. They came to develop all the vices of feudalism, fomenting trouble and oppressing the rural population, Muslim and Christian alike.<sup>67</sup>

## THREE

SICILY UNDER THE  
EARLY FĀṬIMIDS

In 909 the Aghlabid rule came to an end with the Fāṭimid revolution. The Fāṭimids were Ismā'īlī Shī'īs and claimed descent from the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima and her husband 'Alī. Abū-'Abd-Allāh, a Fāṭimid missionary, won over the Kutāma Berbers, and with their help the first Fāṭimid caliph 'Ubayd-Allāh al-Mahdī was installed as the ruler of Ifrīqiyya. Many Sunnī Muslims belonging to the élite of the Aghlabid court took refuge in Sicily.<sup>1</sup>

In Sicily a former deposed governor of the island, 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. Abī-l-Fawāris, championed the Fāṭimid cause and became leader of the pro-Fāṭimid faction, which defeated the pro-Aghlabid faction and arrested the governor Aḥmad b. Abī-Ḥusayn. 'Alī b. Aḥmad was confirmed as governor by the Fāṭimid al-Mahdī 'Ubayd-Allāh, but was soon deposed and replaced by a more trustworthy lieutenant of the Fāṭimids, Ḥasan b. Aḥmad, better known as Ibn-Abī-Khinzīr, in 910.<sup>2</sup> The new *qāḍī* Ishāq b. Abī-l-Minhāl proclaimed al-Mahdī's name in the *khuṭba* (sermon) at Palermo. Fāṭimid rule was thus established in Sicily in practice as well as in theory.

In 911 Ibn-Abī-Khinzīr led an expedition against Val Demone where Christians had risen in revolt. In 912 there was an uprising against him, which may have had a sectarian background. The Mahdī tactfully pardoned the rebels, accepted the removal of Ibn-Abī-Khinzīr and appointed one 'Alī b. 'Umar al-Balawī to the command of Sicily.<sup>3</sup>

In 912-13 the Arab nobility was in a position of great power in Palermo. Among them was a rich nobleman Ziyādat-Allāh b. Qurhub, belonging to a family closely associated with the Aghlabid house. In 913 there was an anti-Fāṭimid Arab uprising in Palermo, which led to a similar uprising among the



Berbers of Girgenti. The Arabs and the Berbers joined hands in electing Ibn-Qurhub as their leader and emir of Sicily. For a short while Ibn-Qurhub gave Sicily a firm, popular and orthodox Sunnī administration. The *khutba* was read in the name of the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Muqtadir (908–932) who sent him a diploma of investiture, legitimising him as emir. There was an influx of Mālikī refugees from Ifrīqiyya into the island.

In 914 Ibn-Qurhub's naval force defeated a Fāṭimid flotilla near the very coast of North Africa. In 915–16 he sent an expedition against the Italian mainland, but though his naval detachment was shipwrecked, Eustathius, the Byzantine strategus of Calabria, agreed to pay tribute to him. Just when his regime seemed to be gaining stability and some power, however, a Berber revolt broke out against him at Girgenti and spread to other parts. The rebels appealed to the Fāṭimid al-Mahdī for support; Ibn-Qurhub was captured and sent to the Mahdī, who reproached him. Ibn-Qurhub's answer was that the Sicilians had raised him to office and then deposed him, in both cases in spite of himself. He was, however, executed.<sup>4</sup>

The Arabs and Berbers, who had revolted against Ibn-Qurhub, were still turbulent and arrogant in their dealings with Fāṭimid authority. The Mahdī appointed Abū-Sa'īd Mūsā aḍ-Ḍayf at the head of a large force of the Kutāma Berbers who had raised the Fāṭimid house to power and who were the backbone of its army. These Berbers brought Palermo, Girgenti and the rest of the island firmly under control, suppressing all resistance brutally. After Abū-Sa'īd had entered Palermo in 917 the ring-leaders of the rebellion were rounded up and sent to the Fāṭimid capital Mahdiyya. He then proclaimed a general amnesty. Muslim Sicily's independence, which seemed a reality under Ibn-Qurhub, was crushed, and Fāṭimid sovereignty was firmly established. His work done Abū-Sa'īd returned to Ifrīqiyya, leaving the island in the hands of the new governor Sālim b. Rashīd.<sup>5</sup>

Sālim ruled Sicily for twenty years from 917 to 937 with diluted authority. In the meantime al-Mahdī 'Ubayd-Allāh died in 934 and was succeeded by his son al-Qā'im (934–946).

The Fāṭimid policy in this period was one of expediency

and tolerance. Ismā'īlī propaganda continued but with great tact.<sup>6</sup> Most of the Christian towns were left in peace. In administration the government was divided into two offices, the first dealing with war and law and order, the second with other spheres of internal administration and jurisdiction. There was a general captain of the constabulary as well as a local chief of the Kutāma Berbers in Sicily.<sup>7</sup>

In 937 a revolt broke out in Girgenti. This was followed by a revolt in Palermo and uprisings throughout the island. Notables of Sicily wrote to al-Qā'im that they were loyal to his authority as the caliph, but that they could no longer bear the tyranny of Sālim. Al-Qā'im accepted their petition and replaced Sālim by a more amiable governor Khalīl b. Ishāq.

It was this new governor who founded the fortified suburb of al-Khālīṣa near Palermo on the model of the Fāṭimid capital Mahdiyya. It was to become the focus of the establishment, with the residence of the governor and the centre for his civil and military departments. It contained the arsenal of the Sicilian capital, the official building, the prison and all the machinery of the government of the island.<sup>8</sup>

In 938 Khalīl moved against Girgenti and besieged it unsuccessfully for eight months. As he imposed new taxes, Muslim settlements in Mazara followed the example of Girgenti and rose in revolt. By one account, the rebels asked help from Byzantium. In 939 Khalīl was able to occupy Mazara; and in 940 forced Girgenti to surrender. Once again the Fāṭimid writ ran throughout the island. His work accomplished, Khalīl returned to Ifrīqiyya in the following year, leaving behind him to administer the island two lieutenants, Ibn-al-Kūfī and Ibn-'Aṭṭāf, neither of whom had the title of governor.

The Khārijite revolt of Abū-Yazīd from 943 to 947, which threatened Fāṭimid rule in Ifrīqiyya, had its indirect repercussions in Sicily. On the one hand, as city after city fell into the hands of Abū-Yazīd, some pro-Fāṭimid elements sought refuge in Sicily. On the other hand, in the southern part of the island there was an uprising among Berber adventurers, and several towns declined to pay tribute or taxes.<sup>9</sup> After the defeat of Abū-Yazīd and the final triumph of Fāṭimid power in Ifrīqiyya, the new caliph al-Manṣūr (946–953) appointed Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Kalbī as governor to deal with the rebels in



the island. With him a new chapter begins in the history of the island.

Turning now to the mainland during this period, one has to take brief notice of the activity of the Spanish Arab adventurers who in 891 planted a colony at Fraxinetum (Garde-Freinet) near Nice, which spread into the interior in the first decade of the tenth century. In 911 the Bishop of Narbonne, who was called to Rome, could not start back because the passes of the Alps were controlled by these Arab freebooters. From time to time they also swooped down into the plains of Piedmont.<sup>10</sup> They remained a threat to neighbouring regions until 940, and were not finally expelled from Fraxinetum until 972 or 973.

Further south Garigliano was the main stronghold of Arab raids in Campagna. In 905 the Arabs at Garigliano attacked Capua, then in alliance with Naples. During the first decade of the tenth century the Arabs reappeared in the neighbourhood of Rome, occupied the Sabine and the towns of Narni, Orte and Nepi. These Arab bands were from Garigliano, possibly also from Sepino and Bojano. Because of the firm occupation of southern Italy by the Byzantines, the Arab raiders were deflected towards central Italy. The Byzantines now imposed their suzerainty on the Duke of Naples, forcing him to give up Naples' traditional, though intermittent, association with the Arabs. In 915 the Byzantine strategus Nicholas Picnigli and his allies from the Italian maritime states converged upon Garigliano and occupied it. The capture of that town meant the end of the last Arab colony on the Tyrrhenian coast; and Campagna and Central Italy became safe from Arab attacks.<sup>11</sup>

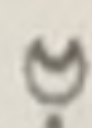
Calabria, however, still remained exposed to the Arabs by sea. Once Fātimid authority was firmly established in Sicily, raids from that island became frequent; but these raids were hit and run adventures, not designed to gain permanent footholds. The Byzantine strategus of Calabria, Eustathius, bought peace with the Arabs in 918 by paying them 22,000 coins of gold. His successor John Muzalon (or Bizalon) had to levy extra taxes to raise the money to pay the tribute, and this provoked a revolt in which he was assassinated.<sup>12</sup> In 925-6 Sicilian flotillas reinforced by some units from Ifrīqiyya raided

the coasts of Lombardy and Calabria. The territory of Salerno and Naples was raided in 929, and that of Genoa in 935.

In Sicily under the early Fātimids there was not much change in the demographic map of the island. The density of the Muslim population was still in the Val di Mazara. New Muslim immigrants were artisans, soldiers and refugees. The population included free men, vassals and slaves. The Christian population was still well entrenched in the eastern part of the island, especially Val Demone.<sup>13</sup> Jawhar, the famous slave-general of the Fātimids, who extended Fātimid rule over practically the whole of North Africa and in 969 conquered Egypt, was of Sicilian-Byzantine origin. Sicilian Muslims rose to high positions in the Fātimid administration in Ifrīqiyya. Among them was Abū-l-Fat'h, the *mutawallī* of Tripoli. One of the leaders of the Fātimid army against the Khārijite rebel Abū-Yazīd was Bushrā, a Sicilian.<sup>14</sup>



## THE KALBITES



In 947 the Banū-ṭ-Ṭabarī, a noble tribe of Persian origin in Palermo, rose against Ibn-ʿAṭṭāf and it was to deal with this situation that Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Kalbī was sent from Ifrīqiyya. This governorship led to the foundation of the semi-independent dynasty of the Kalbites which ruled the island for over ninety years.<sup>1</sup>

After bringing the situation in the island under control Ḥasan invaded the Italian mainland twice, in 950 and 952, as we shall see later. On the death of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Manṣūr and the accession of his son al-Muʿizz (953-975) Ḥasan went back to Mahdiyya to attend the Fāṭimid court, leaving the government of Sicily in the hands of his son Aḥmad b. Ḥasan. In the Fāṭimid service, Ḥasan and a flotilla from Sicily took part in the raid against Almeria in Umayyad Spain. In 958 he joined hands with his brother in his Italian campaign. In 962-3 Aḥmad b. Ḥasan undertook the definitive subjugation of the mountainous region south of Messina where several Christian towns had survived in semi-independence. These towns were now forced to pay *jizya* and Arab colonies were planted in their midst. In the course of these operations Aḥmad, aided by his cousin Ḥasan b. ʿAmmār, turned aside to lay siege to Taormina, which had shaken off Arab rule. The siege lasted for seven-and-a-half months until the surrender of the citadel in December 962. The citizens had to give up their property, but their lives were spared, though many were taken into slavery. Taormina was renamed al-Muʿizziyya in honour of the Fāṭimid caliph.<sup>2</sup>

The Christians of Rametta appealed to the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus Phocas who sent a powerful force for their relief, consisting of Armenian, Russian, and Thracian

troops under the command of the eunuch Nicetas. Aḥmad appealed to al-Muʿizz for reinforcements, and a strong force of Arab and Berber troops was sent under his father Ḥasan. The Byzantines who had landed near Messina suffered a disastrous defeat both by land and sea; Nicetas was made prisoner and sent to Ifrīqiyya. Rametta was taken by storm by the Arabs in 965; but during the siege Ḥasan, the founder of the Kalbite dynasty, had died.<sup>3</sup>

As late as 969 the Fāṭimids had no intention of installing the Kalbite family permanently as hereditary governors of Sicily. After a governorship of more than sixteen years Aḥmad b. Ḥasan was recalled to Ifrīqiyya with all members of the Kalbite family, as well as its clients, dependents and retainers. The government of the island was entrusted to Yāʿish, a freedman of Ḥasan. This led, however, to disorders in Sicily, the main victims of which were the Kutāma Berbers. Al-Muʿizz had to recall Yāʿish and to send Abū-l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. Ḥasan to the island as the deputy of his brother Aḥmad. Aḥmad, however, died a few months later and Abū-l-Qāsim was confirmed as governor in his own right in 970. Kalbite rule was thus implicitly recognised as hereditary by the Fāṭimid sovereigns. In 972 al-Muʿizz transferred the Fāṭimid capital to Cairo; and this meant in practice, though not in theory, much more independence for the Kalbites in Sicily. Bulūkkīn, the Zīrid lieutenant of the Fāṭimid caliphate in Ifrīqiyya, was given no jurisdiction over Sicily. Other factors leading to the consolidation of the Kalbite dynasty in Sicily were the general satisfaction of the Muslim population with the comparative tranquillity in the island, the expansion of Muslim colonies, and the need of the Fāṭimids for a loyal dependency in Sicily, whose ruler might be useful to them in their naval enterprises and to whom they could grant internal independence as they did to the Zīrids in Ifrīqiyya in 972. On their part, the Kalbites remained impeccably loyal to the Fāṭimids and received titles of honour from them.<sup>4</sup>

On the death of Abū-l-Qāsim in the Italian campaign, the notables of Sicily elected his son Jābir as their emir, and he was confirmed by the Fāṭimid caliph al-ʿAzīz (975-996). Jābir lacked the calibre and the administrative ability of his father and his uncle. He was soon deposed by the Sicilians



and recalled to Cairo where he fell victim to a court intrigue. Al-'Azīz next appointed another Kalbite, Ja'far b. Muḥammad to rule Sicily. Arriving in 983 Ja'far set the affairs of the land in order, and worked towards restoring its prosperity. He was respected by the Sicilian élite for his learning and by the common man for his generosity. He died in 986, and was succeeded by his brother 'Abd-Allāh b. Muḥammad, who also died in 986 after an uneventful reign. He had during his lifetime nominated his own son Abū-l-Futūḥ Yūsuf as his successor, and Yūsuf's nomination was confirmed by al-'Azīz, who also bestowed upon him the title of Thiqat-ad-dawla. Yūsuf's rule was efficient and peaceful and he made some incursions into Byzantine territory in southern Italy. He gained a reputation for magnanimity and justice.<sup>5</sup> His own and his court's culture is reflected in the literature of the period.

In 998 Yūsuf became incapacitated by a stroke and his son Ja'far succeeded him, receiving from the Fāṭimid al-Ḥākim (996-1021) the titles of Tāj-ad-dawla and Sayf-al-milla; but in fact he was more independent of the Fāṭimids than his predecessors. He had his own vizier and *ḥājib* (chamberlain) like any other independent Muslim monarch; and the poets of his reign called their patron *malik* (king) in their panegyrics. Though well educated, Ja'far did not possess the qualities or the intellect of his father. He was indolent, avaricious and cruel, and the decline of the Kalbite dynasty really begins with him. In 1015 his brother 'Alī b. Yūsuf rose in revolt against him with the help of Berbers and Negro slaves. The revolt was suppressed and much to the distress of his ailing father Yūsuf, 'Alī was executed. A ten per cent tax was imposed on grain and fruit. This was followed by an uprising in Palermo in 1019. At this juncture his paralysed father Yūsuf intervened, pacified the insurgents, deposed Ja'far and replaced him by his other son Aḥmad, commonly known as al-Ak'ḥal.<sup>6</sup>

At his accession Aḥmad al-Ak'ḥal received from al-Ḥākim the ceremonial title of Ta'yīd-ad-dawla. At this point the emperor Basil II having defeated the Bulgars and re-established Byzantine authority in the Balkans, appointed Bojaannes to deal with the Arabs of Sicily. The latter fortified Reggio and landed at Messina. The Zīrid al-Mu'izz offered support to al-Ak'ḥal, but his flotilla was wrecked in a storm. Byzantine naval

reinforcements under Orestes were defeated near Reggio by the Arabs. Between 1026 and 1035 the combined Zīrid and Kalbite fleets carried out raids against Byzantine territories including Illyria, some Greek islands and even the coast of Thrace; and by 1035 the Byzantines were ready to treat for peace.<sup>7</sup>

In the same year the Kalbite-Zīrid alliance broke up. The leader of a revolt in Sicily, one Abū-Ḥafs, sought help from the Zīrids, and al-Mu'izz sent an expeditionary force to support the rebels. In 1038 al-Ak'ḥal was defeated and executed. For a time the Zīrids seem to have had considerable influence in the island, but other political and military factors were also present, while on the horizon were the Byzantines and beyond them the Normans. In 1037-8 the Byzantines invaded Messina with a powerful force and were joined by an estimated 15,000 Sicilian Christians. The Byzantine general Maniakes had already distinguished himself in the wars in Syria between 1030 and 1034. Messina was soon occupied but it took Maniakes two years to gain a firm foot-hold, despite the assistance of some Russians and several hundred Normans, including Harold Hardrada, hero of Scandinavian sagas.<sup>8</sup> A victory at Rametta led to the occupation of about a dozen towns, while after another significant victory at Troina in 1041 most of the towns around Etna came into his hands. Owing to court intrigues, however, Maniakes was recalled to Constantinople and imprisoned. The generals who succeeded him were less than a match for the Arabs who by 1042 had regained almost all the lost territory. This Arab counter-offensive against the Byzantines was organised and led by the Kalbite prince Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣamṣām.<sup>9</sup>

During the Kalbite period, Sicilian and other Arab naval and military activity against southern Italy continued though without achieving any permanent result. Ḥasan b. 'Alī the founder of the Kalbite dynasty, aided by an auxiliary force from Ifrīqiyya, besieged Reggio and almost penetrated its defences. He then moved towards the north-east and laid siege to Gerace which bought peace by offering to pay tribute. Then, pushing aside a Byzantine force, he reached the valley of Crati and besieged Cassano which also agreed to pay tribute. After this he returned to Messina, but again invaded Calabria in 952, inflicting a severe defeat on the Byzantine



army, whose commander Malakenus was killed. Hasan then proceeded to besiege Gerace, but raised the siege after the arrival of a Byzantine embassy led by John Pilatus and the conclusion of a peace. Among other terms the Byzantines agreed to the construction of a mosque at Reggio. Minor Arab raids continued even after the peace, and from time to time the inhabitants of some coastal towns in Calabria had to seek refuge in the interior.<sup>10</sup>

Hasan's brother 'Ammār invaded Calabria in 956; but in the meantime a Byzantine force had attacked Sicily, taken Termini, situated only twenty-four miles from Palermo, and threatened Mazara. Two years later Hasan joined his brother in a counter-attack in Calabria, and together they challenged the Byzantine fleet at Otranto. About the same time a Muslim flotilla attacked Naples, and, though it failed to capture the city, gained much booty. In 961 peace was again concluded with Byzantium.

After the defeat of Nicetas in 964 a decade of peace between the Byzantines and the Fātimids followed. It was broken by the Byzantine occupation of Messina, which was reoccupied by the Kalbite emir Abū-l-Qāsim in 976. He then pushed on into Calabria and advanced into the valley of Crati as far as Cosenza which was forced to pay tribute. In 975, after a gap of half a century, an Arab force, under one Ismā'il made an incursion into Apulia near Bitonto. In the following year other Arab raids in the region of Bari followed. In 976-7 Abū-l-Qāsim again personally led an Arab force into southern Italy and attacked Taranto, set fire to Oria and advanced as far as Otranto. Santa Agata, near Reggio, was captured by the Arabs. Between 978 and 981 there were frequent raids into Calabria and Apulia. The Arabs even threatened the Lombard territories of Salerno and Capua.<sup>11</sup>

In 982 as the Frankish emperor Otto II advanced into Calabria, Abū-l-Qāsim declared a holy war against him. It has been suggested that there may have been an alliance of the Arabs and the Byzantines against Otto at this stage. Otto inflicted a heavy defeat on the Arabs south of Cotrone; but Abū-l-Qāsim regrouped his forces and achieved a victory. Otto II barely escaped with his life.<sup>12</sup>

Military and naval expeditions occur sporadically through

the next three decades. In 986 the Arabs occupied Gerace and again advanced as far as Cosenza. In 988 they threatened Bari, capital of the Byzantine dominions in southern Italy, but when they could not effectively besiege it, turned to attack Taranto. In 994 they occupied Matera after a long siege. In 1003 they besieged Bari for several months until a Venetian fleet arrived to relieve it. In 1006 an Arab attack near Reggio was repulsed by the Byzantines with help from Pisa. In 1009 the Arabs again marched through Calabria as far as the valley of Crati and occupied Cosenza.<sup>13</sup> By sea the Pisans inflicted a heavy defeat on an Arab fleet in the strait of Messina in 1005-06.<sup>14</sup> Either in 1012<sup>15</sup> or in 1015<sup>16</sup> a Muslim flotilla from Spain under Mujaḥid b. 'Abd-Allāh of Denia made an assault on Pisa. Probably it was the same Arab force which had occupied parts of Sardinia. It was defeated by the combined fleets of Pisa and Genoa. After 1016 no Arab force invaded Sardinia. In 1016 Sicilian Arabs besieged Salerno. During the siege they are reported to have had their first encounter with the Normans.

The same pattern continued for another two decades, but the Arab raids into Apulia began to decrease. Nevertheless, they threatened the suburbs of Bari between 1010 and 1015; and in 1020 in alliance with Rayca, an Apulian, they occupied Bisignano. In 1023 Abū-Ja'far, who has been identified by Amari as the emir al-Ak'ḥal,<sup>17</sup> attacked Bari. In 1029 along with Rayca he ravaged southern Italy and laid siege to the castle of Obbiano. In 1031 the Arabs occupied Cassano.<sup>18</sup> A Sicilian Arab flotilla, which was attacking Corfu in 1032, was defeated by the Byzantine strategus Nicephorus Karentenus. Another fleet from North Africa suffered the same fate off the western coast of Greece. In 1034, when the Byzantine emperor Michael IV sent an embassy to al-Ak'ḥal, the emir of Sicily, he was negotiating from a position of strength; and al-Ak'ḥal accepted from him the title of *magistros*.<sup>19</sup>

From this point onwards the Arabs are on the defensive. In 1034 the Pisans captured Bone in North Africa; thirty years later they were to attack Palermo itself. This attempt, though unsuccessful was of great daring, and was commemorated by the Pisans in verse and in an architectural inscription.<sup>20</sup> Individual Arabs, however, did not at once withdraw, even during the period of the disintegration of Kalbite rule in Sicily



and of the rise of the Normans; at least up to 1060, there continued to live at Reggio and other places in southern Italy a number of Muslims who were probably merchants and refugees. Many Arabic sepulchral epigraphs have survived in Italy.<sup>21</sup>

Poetic sonnets which have come to light in recent decades reveal that the Kalbite state in Sicily was plunged into civil discord in 1040.<sup>22</sup> The Sicilian history of the period from 1040 to 1052 is confused and anarchic. In 1040 the Zirid prince 'Abd-Allāh b. al-Mu'izz was defeated and chased away from the island by the Kalbite Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣamṣām (Ṣamṣām-ad-Dawla). But Ḥasan's authority did not last long and did not extend over the whole island. In the 1040s Muslim Sicily came to be divided into several petty principalities. The qā'id 'Abd-Allāh b. Mankūd (or Mankūt) became the master of Trapani, Marsala, Mazara, Sciacca and the western plains. Another qā'id 'Alī b. Ni'ma, better known as Ibn-Ḥawwās, took possession of Castrogiovanni, Girgenti and Castronovo. The qā'id Ibn-Maklātī occupied Catania a little later. In 1044 aṣ-Ṣamṣām was deposed, and with him the Kalbite dynasty came to an end. Palermo became a kind of oligarchical republic governed by its notables. Of all the petty rulers Ibn-Ḥawwās was comparatively the most powerful.<sup>23</sup> The division of these petty principalities was further accentuated by ethnic distribution. Amidst all the segments of population there were Arab and Berber immigrants from Ifrīqiyya and Spain.<sup>24</sup>

Between 1053 and 1060 yet another qā'id Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. ath-Thumna (better known as Ibn-ath-Thumna)<sup>25</sup> emerged as the master of Syracuse and attacked Ibn-Maklātī, the ruler of Catania, who was married to Ibn-Ḥawwās's sister Maymūna. Ibn-Maklātī was killed and Ibn-ath-Thumna married Maymūna. He also defeated Ibn-Mankūd and took possession of his territory in the western part of the island. Ibn-ath-Thumna appeared at this stage to be even more powerful than Ibn-Ḥawwās. He assumed the august title of al-Qādir-billāh, and had the Friday sermon read in his name in Palermo. A domestic rift between him and his wife Maymūna, and probably also rivalry for the supreme power, led to a conflict between him and her brother Ibn-Ḥawwās, the master of Castrogiovanni. Ibn-ath-Thumna tried to besiege the impregnable city but without success; and on his defeat the whole



PLATE I. Central scene from Fra Filippo Lippi 'Coronation of the Virgin', showing decorative use of Arabic lettering.



of Sicily seemed to slip from his grasp and rally to the support of Ibn-Hawwās. In desperation Ibn-ath-Thumna offered the island to the Normans in southern Italy, in the vain hope that after conquering it they would hand it back to him.<sup>26</sup> As an Arab chronicler puts it, the causes of the ruin of the Muslims in Sicily were envy and discord.<sup>27</sup>

The pattern of the distribution of population according to religious persuasion remained the same as under the Aghlabids. Val di Mazara was predominantly Muslim, Val di Noto was considerably less so; and Christianity continued to be the prevailing religion in Val Demone. But from the beginning the Kalbite policy was to extend Muslim colonies in Val di Noto and Val Demone at the expense of the Christians, whose lands were sometimes confiscated and distributed among Muslims. This policy had very little success as it did not lead to any significant trend of conversion to Islam in these areas. The one steady source of increase for the Muslim population was immigration from North Africa; and this depended largely on the political or economic situation there. In 1004–05 during a pestilence in Ifriqiyya there was heavy immigration to Sicily. Other waves of immigration followed in 1015–16, 1018–19 and 1022–3.<sup>28</sup> Towards the end of the Kalbite rule there was a wave of immigration of the Ismā'ilis persecuted by the Zīrid al-Mu'izz. At its height the Muslim population in Sicily may have consisted of half a million.<sup>29</sup>

There was not much communal unity in the Muslim population. Apart from the Arab-Berber hostility which erupted from time to time there were other divisive policies and factors of internecine tension. Al-Ak'hal played off the old and new immigrants against each other. The Sicilian Muslims are compared sometimes to the *muwallad* ethnic group in Spain, and were similarly exploited by the Arab élite.

Muqaddisi is alone in stating that the Muslim population in Sicily adhered to the Hanafī legal rite.<sup>30</sup> All other accounts agree that the Mālikī rite was generally followed. Presumably the Kalbite rulers, who remained loyal to the nominal suzerainty of the Fātimids, were Ismā'ilis, at least outwardly, and so must have been a certain unknown percentage of the ruling hierarchy. But Ismā'ilism does not seem to have seeped down to the levels of the creative élite and the masses of the popula-



PLATE 2. Section of the ceiling of the Palatine Chapel, Palermo.



tion. Whereas many Sunnī theological works were written in Sicily, there is no evidence of any significant Ismā'īlī scholarship. All this indicates that Kalbite Sicily enjoyed remarkable religious tolerance in so far as Islamic sects were concerned. There were several divisive factors within the Islamic population of the island, as we have seen; but sectarianism was not one of these.

In Val di Mazara, the soldiers of the *jund* were paid cash by the exchequer. Each *iqḷīm* (district) in Sicily had a unit of the *jund*, and its military and religious centre. In addition, the *iqṭā'* system which had been imported and introduced by the Aghlabids, led in this period to multiple division of land according to the Muslim law of inheritance. Arab place-names for small hamlets and farms, which have survived in Sicily, point to the fragmentation of small-holdings.<sup>31</sup> In Christian areas revenue was raised by the classical Islamic taxes, *jizya* (poll tax) and *kharāj* (land tax), assuming that by this time these two taxes were clearly distinguished.

The agricultural economy of Kalbite Sicily was sustained by an excellent irrigation system. Persian hydraulic techniques were imported and the Roman siphon system was also retained.<sup>32</sup> Remains of Arab reservoirs still survive. Most sources of water in Sicily acquired Arabic names as did also the measurements of the flow of water. Abundance of fresh water from springs and rivulets made the island rich in horticulture and gardening. Cotton and hemp were cultivated at Giattini and in other areas. Oranges, lemons and other citrus fruits were grown in abundance and exported. The Arabs brought to Sicily, and to Europe, the knowledge of cultivating sugarcane and crushing it in mills. They also introduced mulberries, silk-worms, papyrus, the sumac tree for tanning and dye as well as such fruits as dates, and nuts like pistachio. Sicilian Arab poets testify to the excellence of wine distilled from indigenous grapes. The Sicilian Muslims were experts in growing root and green vegetables. All this led to a revolutionary change in the agrarian and industrial economy of Sicily. Arabic horticultural loan-words in the Sicilian dialect bear testimony to Arab expertise in agriculture.<sup>33</sup>

Mining industries included gold, silver, lead, mercury, sulphur, naphtha, vitriol, antimony and alum. Most of the

mineral production was concentrated in the region of Etna. Ammonium salt was mined near Etna and sold abroad. Timber was collected in abundance from the forests, especially in the broad valley above Cefalu. There was a thriving fishing industry, and a new technique of tunny fishing was developed.

Silk manufactured in Sicily had markets abroad. There were *tirāz* factories, manufacturing precious cloth at Corleone and Palermo; but most of the *tirāz* output was consumed within Sicily. Foreign trade was mainly in the hands of the Arabs; but there is evidence that there were some traders in cereals, slaves and cattle, who were of Persian origin.<sup>34</sup> There was active trade between Sicily and Ifrīqiyya, Egypt and the Muslim outposts in southern Italy. There was also considerable trade with Italian coastal states, especially Naples, Salerno and Amalfi. This volume of trade brought great wealth to the island.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, because of the internal civil strife which erupted from time to time fortresses and fortified points had to be constructed where the peasants and other citizens could take refuge if there was war in the area. Kalbite Sicily had 320 fortresses spread over the island, guarding twenty-three cities, numerous towns and numberless hamlets.<sup>36</sup> Palermo was fortified; and the fortifications of its two important quarters, the *qaṣr* and the *khālīṣa* were especially strong. In every *iqḷīm* at least one city was well-fortified and had a cathedral mosque to serve as the bastion of Muslim power.

During the reign of Abū-l-Qāsim, the globe-trotting geographer Ibn-Hawqal visited Sicily in 872-3. From his account we get a clear impression of Palermo under the early Kalbites. The city was surrounded by a wall and a trench. The whole city was divided into five sections (*ḥārāt*). Of these the *qaṣr* was situated in old Palermo, its fortifications were flanked by towers; and in it lived the merchants and the nobility of the city. The *khālīṣa*, where the emir and his retainers had their residences, did not have markets or warehouses; but it had public offices, the arsenal, the prison and several baths. More populous and larger than these two élite sections of the city was the unfortified *ḥārat aṣ-Ṣaḡāliba* or the 'Slav Quarter', which was on the coast and was the meeting place for sailors and foreign merchants. The remaining two sections of the town were the *al-ḥāra al-jadīda* (the New Quarter) and the



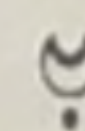
quarter of the cathedral mosque. These two sections had their markets and crafts and were inhabited by soldiers, oil merchants, grain merchants, grocers, tailors, armourers and coppersmiths. In addition to the five major sections of the city, Ibn-Hawqal also mentions other, smaller, quarters, such as a Jewish quarter and the *mu'askar*, presumably a small military colony. The population of the whole city at that time was about 300,000. From the city to the banks of Oreto the whole area was full of gardens and pleasantries.<sup>37</sup>

There were more mosques in Palermo than in any other Muslim city Ibn-Hawqal had visited. People prided themselves on having mosques exclusively for the use of their families and their clients (*mawālī*).<sup>38</sup> According to another Arab geographer al-Muqaddisi, the two *'ids* (festivals) were celebrated with more splendour in Sicily than elsewhere in the Islamic world.<sup>39</sup>

The population of Palermo was very mixed. Apart from the Arabs, there were Berbers, Greeks, Lombards, Jews, Slavs, Persians, Turks and Negroes. There were contrasts of riches and poverty, of violent soldiering and peaceful pursuit of crafts. The Muslims had adopted a large number of non-Muslim practices. As in every other metropolis, there was in Palermo pride, rancour, misery and other social maladies.<sup>40</sup> These seem to have annoyed Ibn-Hawqal to the point of irritation. He complains that Palermo had no talented men, no scholars, no wise or pious persons, accusations which are proved untrue by other evidence. He found the people of the city dull and lazy and inclined more towards vice than virtue. He is annoyed with their diet which included an excessive use of raw onions.<sup>41</sup> This tarnished the image of Palermo among some later Muslim geographers, and is reflected in Yāqūt, who regards the diet of Sicilian Muslims as unwholesome and odorous, their habits as neither clean nor pious, and their houses as dark and dirty.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, there are accounts praising the Muslims of Sicily for their cleanliness, their style of dress, their moderation and their cultivation of moral qualities.<sup>43</sup>

Messina was probably the most spacious of all Sicilian ports, and an international depôt of commerce where traders from Europe and North Africa converged.

## INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY DURING THE MUSLIM PERIOD



Though Sicily was an outlying domain of the world of Islam and had a turbulent history under Muslim rule, there were several elements favouring the efflorescence of learning and letters there. Teachers in mosque-schools in Sicily were exempt from participation in holy wars.<sup>1</sup> Both the Aghlabid and the Kalbite ruling élite included persons who were not merely patrons of letters but creative writers and savants in their own right.<sup>2</sup> It was a haven of refuge for scholars persecuted in North Africa. Conversely Sicilian scholars migrated during periods of turmoil to North Africa or Egypt; and travelled even further east in quest of knowledge or on the pilgrimage to Mecca. This coming and going of scholars kept Sicily in the mainstream of Islamic scholarship. In the tenth and eleventh centuries it specially benefited from the major intellectual currents which had developed in Cairouan.

Mosques were often the centres of these intellectual activities where grammar and lexicography were taught besides the religious sciences like *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *ḥadīth* (Prophetic Traditions) and *qirā'āt* (recitation of the Qur'ān). Poetic tradition was also continued and acclimatised in Sicily. 'Alī b. Ḥamza al-Baṣrī, the famous philologist and *rāwī* (narrator) of the great Arabic poet al-Mutanabbī, migrated to Sicily and died there in 985. Studies of al-Mutanabbī and commentaries on his works were written by Ibn-al-Birr who visited Sicily, as well as by Sicilians like Ibn-Qaṭṭa' and Abu-'Alī al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abd-Allāh.<sup>3</sup>

Among the early Qur'ānic scholars was Muḥammad b. Khurāsān, whose father was a *mawlā* (client) of the Aghlabids. He studied in Egypt and later with Ibn-Muẓaffar, presumably in Iraq. He returned to Sicily and died there in 996.<sup>4</sup> Another



Sicilian authority on Qur'ānic recitation was Ismā'il b. Khalaf, who had studied in Egypt, and on his return taught in Sicily. Owing to political upheavals in the island he migrated first to Spain, then to Egypt, where he died in 1063. Manuscripts of his famous work *Kitāb al-'unwān fī-l-qirā'āt* are available in Berlin, Istanbul and at Bankipore. Another of his works was a treatise on the diacritics of the Qur'ānic text.<sup>5</sup>

One of the early scholars of *ḥadīth*, Abū-l-'Abbās, whom tradition counts among the teachers of the traditionist Abū-Dā'ūd and the historian Ṭabarī, is regarded by some, probably apocryphally, as of Calabrian origin.<sup>6</sup> A Sicilian *ḥadīth* scholar of early tenth century was Abū-Bakr Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm at-Tamīmī, who went in search of knowledge as far as Iraq where he is reported to have attended the Ṣūfī *ḥalqa* (circle) founded by the great mystic Junayd. He eventually returned to Sicily.<sup>7</sup>

There are several other scholars whose names alone have survived. These include Ibn-Farā',<sup>8</sup> Mūsā b. Ḥasan who migrated to Egypt,<sup>9</sup> 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Bakr who also had a proclivity towards Ṣūfism and who travelled through North Africa, Egypt and the Hijaz, Ḥasan b. 'Alī who died in Mecca in 1001 and Abū-l-Qāsim (d. 1035). Among minor Sicilian traditionists were Abū-Mas'ūd Sulaymān who settled down in Baghdād and Abū-l-Faḍl 'Abbās b. 'Amr who migrated to and taught in Spain.<sup>10</sup> The Kalbite Abū-Muḥammad 'Ammār was a renowned scholar of *ḥadīth*.<sup>11</sup>

Asad b. al-Furāt with whom the Arab occupation of Sicily begins was primarily a scholar of *fiqh*, and indeed one of the foremost jurists of Islam's first three centuries. His family, which belonged to the Arab tribe of Banū Sulaym, had settled in Nishapur. Asad himself was born in 759 at Ḥarrān in Iraq. His father brought him to Cairouan when he was two years old. Asad studied the Qur'ān in North Africa, but early in his youth went to Medina where, according to a tradition, he studied under no less an authority than Mālik b. Anas, the source of the Mālikī school of law. At any rate he studied Mālikī law under Abū-l-Ḥasan al-'Absī (d. 800). In Kufa he met and probably studied under some of the famous disciples of Abū-Ḥanīfa, the fountain-head of the Ḥanafī school of law. In Egypt he further studied Mālikī law under one of its eminent

doctors, Ibn-al-Qāsim. He returned to Cairouan in 797, and there compiled his famous work, the *Asadiyya*, which is not a commentary on Mālik's *al-Muwattā'*, but rather a compendium of the juristic opinions of Ibn-al-Qāsim. The influence of the Khārijite 'Ibādī movement on his spiritual formation has also been suggested. In 818 he was appointed the *qāḍī* of Cairouan, a post which he held concurrently with Abū-Muḥriz Muḥammad. Asad popularised some aspects of Ḥanafī teaching in North Africa; and his juristic position seems to be one of eclecticism between the Mālikī and the Ḥanafī schools. It has also been asserted that the great North African jurist Saḥnūn was one of his disciples, though in his later work he disagreed with Asad.<sup>12</sup>

Several works on Mālikī law were written in Aghlabid Sicily. One such work was by Yaḥyā b. 'Umar (d. 903), and this was as popular in Sicily as it was in North Africa.<sup>13</sup> Another eminent Sicilian jurist was Maymūn b. 'Amr (d. 928), a disciple of Saḥnūn, whose other disciple Dī'āna b. Muḥammad (d. 909) was one of the chief *qāḍīs* of Sicily under the Aghlabids. A Persian jurist Abū-Ja'far Marwazī made his way to Sicily in 905, but was strongly suspected of heresy.<sup>14</sup> Because of the close religious and intellectual relationship between North Africa and Sicily, scholars of one land held positions and offices in the other and vice versa. Thus Luqmān b. Yūsuf (d. 930), an eminent scholar of Mālikī law had stayed and served for fourteen years in Sicily.<sup>15</sup> The dates of another Sicilian jurist Abū-Muḥammad Ḥasan b. 'Alī are not certain, but his work on the Mālikī law of inheritance was considered authoritative.<sup>16</sup> Other noted Sicilian jurists are Ibn Yūnus (d. 1059), whose commentary on *al-Mudawwana* was considered authoritative, and his disciple 'Abd-al-Ḥaqq b. Muḥammad Qurashī, who performed the pilgrimage twice and is reported to have met Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī. His works include critical commentaries on Saḥnūn.<sup>17</sup> A Sicilian jurist and theologian noted for his piety and for his scholarship was 'Atīq b. 'Alī as-Samanṭārī, who travelled extensively in the Muslim orient.<sup>18</sup>

In *kalām* (scholastic theology) the Sicilian scholars generally followed the Ash'arite school.<sup>19</sup> Some of the jurists like 'Abd-al-Ḥaqq b. Muḥammad and Ibn-Zafar were also theologians.



Al-Mazārī was renowned both as a jurist and as a theologian; his critique of al-Juwaynī is steeped in Ash'arite scholasticism.

Biographical and hagiographical literature provides information about several pious men and saints in Sicily, who abstained from vices, spent days and nights in prayer and penitence and were generally respected by the populace. Early Sūfism in Sicily as represented by Abū-Bakr Muḥammad and as-Samanṭārī was simple and ascetic. Sa'id b. Sallām, a Sicilian born in Girgenti, travelled to the Hijaz where he was held in esteem, and finally went to Iran where he died at Nishapur in 983.<sup>20</sup> Abū-l-Ḥasan 'Alī is said to have been a disciple of the famous mystic Sarī Saqaṭī.<sup>21</sup> 'Atīq b. Muḥammad, a Sicilian mystic, migrated to Baghdad where he won respect.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, Ibn-Ḥawqal the geographer, who was very critical of Sicilian Arab manners and customs, was also very critical of the *ṣūfī ribāṣ* (hospices) in Sicily, which he describes as nests of sanctimonious ruffians and slanderers.<sup>23</sup> Others have also criticised the *malāmī* (blameworthy or blame-seeking) tendencies of Sicilian Sūfism, its riotous excesses and its preoccupation with song and dance.

Turning to more secular intellectual activity one may begin with history. Apart from the so-called 'Cambridge Chronicle', written in Kalbite Sicily by a Christian, or the son of a Christian, and forming an important source for the history of Muslim Sicily, little historical writing by the Muslims of Sicily has survived. Ḥajjī Khalifa has mentioned a history of Sicily by Abū-Zayd al-Ghumārī who was a Berber.<sup>24</sup>

A scholar of Sicilian origin, 'Abd-Allāh translated Dioscorides's treatise on Botany for 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān III, the Umayyad caliph of Spain. An astronomer, mathematician and poet Abū-'Abd-Allāh b. al-Qaranī is mentioned by Ibn-Qaṭṭā', who also points out that the famous poet and belletrist Ibn-aṭ-Ṭāzī was primarily a medical doctor.<sup>25</sup> Amari has conjectured that, as there were Greeks living side by side with Arabs, the Arabs of Sicily must have paid some attention to Greek philosophy and science, and studied them in the Greek language.<sup>26</sup> Among the Arab physicians in Sicily was Abū-Sa'id b. Ibrāhīm whose work on pharmacopoeia has survived. Abū-Bakr aṣ-Ṣiqillī was among the teachers of the famous physician and author Ibn-Abī-Uṣaybī'a.<sup>27</sup> Abū-l-'Abbās

Aḥmad b. 'Abd-as-Salām wrote a commentary on one of Avicenna's medical works.<sup>28</sup>

Under Abū-l-Futūḥ Yūsuf the arts and the sciences flourished in Kalbite Sicily. The intellectuals of his reign included a bizarre character, Ibn-al-Mu'addib, who spent his energy in pursuit of alchemy and in the quest of the philosopher's stone. More distinguished was Muḥammad b. 'Abdūn a panegyrist of the emir. The culture and gentility of the Kalbite court was known and admired on the Italian mainland.<sup>29</sup>

In lexicography and in philological and linguistic studies Sicily was very much a part of the world of Islam. Sicilian scholars in these fields travelled or migrated abroad, while scholars from other countries made Sicily their home. Thus, a Cordovan grammarian, linguist and poet Mūsā b. Aṣṣagh came to live in Sicily. At the beginning of the eleventh century another distinguished linguist, Sa'id b. Fat'hūn, arrived in Sicily. An eminent Sicilian grammarian, Abū-'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad al-Kattānī (1035-1118) travelled through Iraq, Khurasan and Ghaznawid India, and died at Isfahan.<sup>30</sup> An Aghlabid freedman who had settled down in Sicily and won fame as a scholar of the Qur'ān and of Arabic grammar was Muḥammad b. Khurāsān whose name suggests a Persian origin.<sup>31</sup> *Riyāḍ an-nufūs* is the outstanding Sicilian contribution to the *ṭabaqāt* literature, giving notices on the life and works of jurists, grammarians, lexicographers, poets and others. Sa'id b. Ḥasan, a lexicographer of Baghdad, travelled to Sicily and died there in 995. Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad ar-Raqabānī, a well-known lexicographer of his time, spent the greater part of his life in Sicily. His son 'Alī was also a lexicographer and knew a great deal of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry by heart.<sup>32</sup>

One of the most famous linguists of Sicily was Ibn-Rashīq (1000-1070), of Greek or Italian ancestry, born at M'sila in North Africa, and an immigrant to Sicily where he died at Mazara. His immigration to Sicily was probably occasioned by the pillaging of the Hilālian Arabs in Ifrīqiyya. His major work on poetics, the *Kitāb al-'umda*,<sup>33</sup> had already been written in North Africa, under the patronage of the Zīrid Mu'izz b. Badīs. It is considered one of the finest works on poetic criticism in Arabic. A number of his other works, now lost,



were written after his arrival in Sicily. He was also a classical poet of eminence.<sup>34</sup>

Ibn-al-Birr (Abū-Bakr Muḥammad b. 'Alī), lexicographer and philologist, was born in Sicily towards the end of the tenth century. He studied in the Orient and at Alexandria and Mahdiyya, returning to Sicily towards the end of the Kalbite period. At a later date he lived for a time at Mazara under the *qā'id* Ibn-Mankūd and there he met Ibn-Rashīq. Ibn-Mankūd sent him away because of his addiction to alcohol. He then went to Palermo where he lived until 1068. He contributed to the survival of the poetic tradition of al-Mutanabbī, and may have been responsible for the transmission of the famous dictionary *aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ* of Jawharī.<sup>35</sup>

Only partial extracts from the works of Sicilian Arabic poets have survived in anthologies. The most distinguished is Ibn-al-Qaṭṭā's *Durrat al-Khaṭira*, selections from which, as well as extracts from the works of several other poets of the island are included in 'Imād-ad-dīn Kātib al-Iṣfahānī's great anthology, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr*.<sup>36</sup> Other such anthologies include those of Ibn-Sa'id al-Maghribī and Ibn-Bashrūn.

At least one of the Aghlabid princes posted in Sicily, Mujbir b. Ibrāhīm was a poet. He was the *wālī* of Messina and of the Arab territories in southern Italy and was taken prisoner by the Byzantines.<sup>37</sup> Of the Kalbite emirs and princes quite a few wrote poetry. They included Aḥmad b. Ḥasan, 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan, Ja'far b. Yūsuf and others.<sup>38</sup> Naturally, these and other Kalbites were patrons of poets; so were also some of the Kalbite nobles and officers. These included the jurist Abū-Musā 'Isā b. 'Abd-al-Mun'im and his son Muḥammad.<sup>39</sup> The secretary Ibn-aṣ-Ṣabbāgh, a supporter of al-Ak'hal and a friend of Ibn-Rashīq, was also a poet.

A remarkable Arab poet who lived for nearly half a century at the Kalbite court was Ibn-al-Khayyāt. Practically nothing is known of his life in Palermo. Some fragments of his verse have been preserved by his friend Ismā'il at-Tujibī. Some 200 lines of Ibn-al-Khayyāt's verses have survived and show him as a panegyrist of the Kalbites and an admirer of the Sicilian landscape.<sup>40</sup> Abū-l-Qāsim Hāshim b. Yūnus who was a writer of epistles, witticisms and *maqāmāt* was also a poet.<sup>41</sup> Abū-l-Faḍl Mushrif b. Rāshid, whose three panegyrics have

survived, was a harmonious and gentle poet who did not lack either vigour of style or loftiness of thought.<sup>42</sup> Ibn-aṭ-Ṭāzī, who has been mentioned earlier, was also probably the most eminent satirist of Kalbite Sicily, and is notable in this field for the vivacity of his conceits, his incisive style and his elegance and grace. Another famous writer of prose and verse was Ibn-aṭ-Ṭubī (Abū-l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ḥasan b. aṭ-Ṭubī) who lived in the first half of the eleventh century, travelled through the Orient and was attached for a time to the court of the Zīrid Mu'izz b. Badīs in Ifriqiyya.<sup>43</sup> Ibn-as-Sūsī, a poet of either Spanish or Maltese origin made Palermo his home and wrote of Sicily with nostalgia.<sup>44</sup>

The themes of Sicilian Arabic poetry of the Kalbite era are eulogy, love, wine and the funerary elegy, or else the praise of palace, lute, lamp, orange and palm. Most of this poetry has a singular beauty of its own. One does not perceive in it much of the characteristic tone of eroticism prevalent in Arabic poetry in general, but rather a sense of pride in the valour of Arab heroes in Sicily, an exaltation of the heroism of its emirs, and an attitude of human sorrow expressed with rare simplicity.<sup>45</sup>

In the tradition of poetry Arab Sicily naturally gravitated towards North Africa to which it was politically attached, but Gabrieli has made an interesting point in suggesting elements in direction and style which point to a close affinity between the Arab Spanish and Arab Sicilian poetic traditions. The works of the eminent Spanish Arab poets Ibn-Zaydūn, Ibn-Labbāna and Ibn-az-Zaqqāq have those very characteristics one finds in the surviving extracts of Sicilian poetry; the same themes, the same heritage of imagination, the same formal refinements, even often the same metre concentrating on the lyrical vision. Sicily was almost a 'literary province' of Spain during the tenth and eleventh centuries. The form called *ṣajal*, to which Ibn-Quzmān owes his fame in Spain, was also written in Sicily and was probably close to the spirit and language of the people. It gives one a clue to the character of the spoken Arabic of the island, which was probably similar to some contemporary North African dialect.<sup>46</sup>



## THE NORMANS IN SICILY

According to Aimé of Monte Cassino a band of Norman knights returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem arrived near Salerno at a time when it was being besieged by the Arabs and put the besiegers to flight. Impressed by the courage and military skill of these Norman adventurers, Guaimar IV, the Prince of Salerno, sent a message to Normandy inviting Norman auxiliaries to join his army. This invitation is said to have brought many Norman adventurers and their followers to southern Italy.<sup>1</sup> It is possible, however, that this story is legendary.<sup>2</sup>

In the early eleventh century when the Normans made their appearance in southern Italy, the region was divided into several small units. Apulia and Calabria were under Byzantine occupation. Gaeta, Naples and Amalfi were small republics. Benevento, Capua and Salerno were Lombard principalities.

The early Norman adventurers, entering the service of Guaimar IV of Salerno and other princelings, invaded Byzantine territory, and succeeded in establishing themselves in southern Italy at the expense of the Byzantines. Their leader was William of the Iron Arm, one of the sons of Tancred of Hauteville. In 1048 William died and his brother Drogo came to be regarded as leader of the Apulian Normans. Drogo's brother Robert Guiscard arrived later and to him was assigned the conquest of Calabria. Robert Guiscard's early career was one of unabashed brigandage. He 'shrank from no violence and nothing was sacred to him; he respected neither old age, nor women and children, and on occasion he spared neither church nor monastery'.<sup>3</sup>

Though Drogo was killed in a plot against the Normans in 1051, their power continued to increase. At last Pope Leo IX

took up arms against them in alliance with Argyrus the Byzantine strategus of Bari, but he was defeated and taken prisoner by the Normans in 1053, and not released until he had agreed to all their demands. In 1057 Robert Guiscard threatened Reggio, the gateway to Sicily. His brother Roger had recently arrived in southern Italy and was established by him at Monteleone. In 1058 Robert and Roger quarrelled; and Roger took up a career of brigandage by which his brother's territory suffered most. Robert Guiscard made peace with him, giving him half of Calabria.<sup>4</sup>

In 1059 the Normans were reconciled with Pope Nicholas II and the latter received an oath of fealty from Guiscard and conferred upon him the investiture for the duchy of Apulia, Calabria and Sicily.

In 1060 Guiscard took Taranto, Brindisi and Reggio from the Byzantines. With the occupation of Reggio, 'he and his brother Roger were irresistibly attracted to Sicily'; but the Byzantine challenge to their rear in Apulia was still there. Between 1060 and 1071 Guiscard remained locked in the struggle with the Byzantines, a struggle from which he emerged successful; but, as a result of this preoccupation with the Byzantines, his rôle in the conquest of Sicily became secondary to that of his brother Roger.<sup>5</sup>

The richness and fertility of the island must have tempted the Normans, while the presence of Muslims in Sicily must have appeared to them as posing a threat to their newly acquired Italian possessions.<sup>6</sup> The civil war and anarchy in Sicily attracted them. According to Arab historians Ibn-ath-Thumna had offered to the Normans the whole island as the price of their help, but according to European sources only a part of it. In any case he sent one of his sons as a hostage to Robert Guiscard.<sup>7</sup> The stage for the Norman conquest of Italy was also set by the victories of the Genoese and the Pisans against the Arabs.

Roger made the first probe into Sicily in 1060, and embarking from Reggio attacked Messina which defended itself successfully. Roger retired to the mainland. A Christian tradition that he had been invited by the Christians of the island, may be discounted.<sup>8</sup>

In February 1061 Roger attacked Messina again, this time



at the invitation of Ibn-ath-Thumna, and was again unsuccessful. These two early failures convinced Roger that no progress was possible in Sicily until Messina was reduced. He and Robert Guiscard set themselves to the task of gathering a strong expeditionary force for the purpose. This intelligence was not lost upon the Muslim defenders of Messina who asked Ibn-al-Hawwās for reinforcements. Roger landed at Calcara, south of Messina, defeated the Muslim expeditionary force that was approaching to help Messina, and then, at the head of a Norman army of 2,000, at last occupied that city.<sup>9</sup> The greater part of the Muslim garrison of Messina fled from the battlefield; Muslim women, children, slaves and enormous booty fell to the share of the Normans.<sup>10</sup>

Guiscard made Messina the centre of Norman operations in Sicily and reconstructed its fortifications. The Normans occupied Rametta easily, as its governor was probably a partisan of Ibn-ath-Thumna. The Christian population in the region between Rametta and Frazanno offered the Normans no resistance. Through the valley of Simeto the army of Roger proceeded to Centorbi but could not occupy it. It occupied Paterno, however, in the province of Catania. It has been suggested that this Norman expedition in 1061 may have aimed at restoring to Ibn-ath-Thumna this territory, which seems to have been occupied by Ibn-al-Hawwās, for in this region the Normans did not meet with any serious resistance.<sup>11</sup>

The Normans met real resistance, however, in the siege of Castrogiovanni where Ibn-al-Hawwās had gathered around him a large army. They were unable to take that strong fortress, but pillaged the neighbouring areas. In the siege of Castrogiovanni the Normans had Robert Guiscard at their head, while Roger sacked the area of Girgenti. Failing to take Castrogiovanni, the Normans retired, still holding Messina and the foothold they had established in Sicily.<sup>12</sup>

Towards the end of 1061, Roger again pillaged the area between Messina and Girgenti; and the Christians of Troina surrendered that town to him. In the spring of 1062 he made another incursion in conjunction with Ibn-ath-Thumna, and occupied Petralia near Cefalu. While Roger returned to Italy, Ibn-ath-Thumna continued the campaign and was slain in a skirmish. His death deprived the Normans of a valuable ally;

they had to vacate Troina and Petralia, and fall back on Messina.<sup>13</sup> At this juncture another quarrel between Robert Guiscard and Roger broke out, but was soon patched up for fear of an insurrection, and the two brothers agreed to a mutual condominium over every town and every stronghold in Calabria.

Roger was now able to turn his full attention to Sicily; but at this juncture the Christian population turned against him because of the way the Normans violated their women.<sup>14</sup> After a long siege, however, he was able to reoccupy Troina.

In the meantime, soon after experiencing the first impact of the Normans, some Sicilian Muslims had taken refuge in Ifriqiyya and reported to Mu'izz b. Badis the miserable situation of the Muslims on the island and the discord among them. Mu'izz sent a naval force towards Sicily, but it was dispersed by a storm near Pantellaria. Tamīm who succeeded his father Mu'izz in 1062 decided to send another expeditionary force under his two sons Ayyūb and 'Alī. Ayyūb landed in Palermo and established the suzerainty of his father in the area ranging from Mazara to Cefalu. 'Alī, aided by Ibn-al-Hawwās, established himself in Girgenti and then helped to reinforce Castrogiovanni.

For some time after 1063 Ayyūb was the principal Muslim military leader in Sicily; but discord had developed between the Sicilian Muslims and the North African expeditionary force. Ayyūb and Ibn-al-Hawwās quarrelled and fought, and the latter was slain. Ayyūb became the master of Girgenti, Castrogiovanni and Palermo. Between 1065 and 1067 there was no major battle between the Muslims and the Normans. But in 1068 Roger inflicted a decisive defeat on Ayyūb at Misilmeri, which demoralised and lowered the prestige of the North African faction so that it departed with Ayyūb for North Africa, leaving the Sicilian Muslims seriously disorganised. They had respite for a few years, however, until 1071, since Roger was away in Italy helping his brother in the siege of Bari.

After the fall of Bari, Robert Guiscard organised a fleet to help with the capture of Palermo which, if besieged only by land, could still have been supplied by sea. His navy consisted of sailors from Bari, Calabrians and Greeks. On their way to



Palermo, the Normans treacherously occupied the seat of the successors of Ibn-ath-Thumna who were still their allies.<sup>15</sup> The Norman forces then converged on Palermo and besieged it by land and sea. A North African contingent which came to the help of the beleaguered metropolis, penetrated the blockade but with severe losses. The siege lasted for several months. A famine took toll of both the besieged and the besiegers. At last in January 1072 Palermo surrendered and its Muslim population was given assurances of the protection of life, religion and laws.<sup>16</sup>

The fall of Palermo led to the submission of Mazara also, but Castrogiovanni continued to resist. In 1072 the whole of the northern coast of the island was in Norman hands. In the west the Norman writ ran to Mazara; and in the east to Messina. The Muslims in the centre of the island thus found themselves outflanked on both sides. The Norman possessions in the island were partitioned between the two brothers: Guiscard retained the suzerainty of the island and directly controlled Palermo, a part of Messina and Val Demone; the rest fell to the share of Roger who was invested by his brother as the Count of Sicily.

After the fall of Palermo, the Muslims held out even in Val Demone in a triangle surrounded by the Norman possessions of Messina, Troina and Catania. Their centre was Taormina. The Muslims were also the masters of Trapani and the surrounding areas. Arab areas professed allegiance either to the emir of Castrogiovanni in the centre or to the emir of Syracuse in the south.

In 1072 the hero of the Muslim resistance in the south was one Benavert or Benarvet according to the European chroniclers,<sup>17</sup> probably the Ibn-'Abbād<sup>18</sup> who was eulogised by the famous Sicilian poet Ibn-Hamdīs. At this stage, the Muslim part of the island was totally in arms against the Normans. An appeal for help was sent to the Zīrid Tamīm and in 1074 he sent a flotilla which raided Nicotra in Calabria and in 1075 made a landing near Mazara, only to be repulsed by the Normans. In reprisal for the Muslim raids, especially Benavert's activities, Roger made such severe depredations that in 1076-7 Sicily suffered from a terrible famine.<sup>19</sup> In 1079 Roger organised an expedition against Taormina and the



PLATE 3. Decoration and inscription.  
From the ceiling of the Palatine Chapel.



treat with him as an equal. In fact he represented stability and power amidst the general anarchy in the Norman dominions of Italy. In return for his services in arbitration, Roger of Sicily extorted from his nephew the cession to himself of strongholds in Calabria, as well as Guiscard's half of Palermo. Roger of Sicily became one of the leading personalities of Europe. His alliance was sought by Count Raymond IV of St Gilles, Philip I of France, Conrad, son of Henry IV, and Kalman (Koloman), King of Hungary. His nephew was unable to give the protection required by the Holy See; so Urban II offered him that position in 1098 and conceded to him the Apostolic Legateship; the effect of this was that Papal intervention in Roger's state could be exercised only through the Count himself. Thus with the help of a strong military force, a considerable part of which was Muslim, Roger of Sicily was enabled to bring Sicily back into the mainstream of European politics.<sup>22</sup>

Soon after the death of his brother, Roger began the division of his possessions in Sicily and Italy into fiefs, and distributed them amongst the members of his family and his companions. Sicily, which had a large Muslim population, thus became feudalised. This division in some cases preserved the distribution of territories as it had been in Muslim times, and the fiefs then corresponded to former Muslim military districts (*aqālīm*). From surviving *platae* (lists maintained by the feudatories of the *villeins* in the fiefs assigned to them) it appears that a vast number of these *villeins* were Muslims.<sup>23</sup>

In the decade which followed the completion of the conquest, 1091–1101, Roger ruled the island with tranquillity and tolerance. The only considerable revolt against him was that of the Muslims of Pantalica, and this was easily suppressed. On the whole the Muslims, whom he treated with tolerance, remained obedient to him. In his attacks on Amalfi and Capua in 1098, the Muslim element in his army was prominent. For reasons of state he resisted the ecclesiastical pressure for the conversion of Muslims to Christianity.<sup>24</sup>

Roger died on 22 June 1101, at the age of 70, and at the height of his power. The regency of Roger I's widow, the Countess Adelaide continued for a decade from 1101 to 1111. She ruled Sicily and Calabria in the name of her son Simon until 1103;

and in the name of her second son, Roger II, until 1111. The period of the regency appears to have been uneventful on the whole. During this period Palermo was made the seat of government. Adelaide was sought in marriage by King Baldwin of Jerusalem towards the end of her regency in Sicily. Before leaving for Jerusalem she stipulated that if this second marriage proved childless, the crown of Jerusalem should pass to her son Roger II. This agreement remained a dead letter, and the abandoned queen died miserably in Sicily.<sup>25</sup>

Roger II (1111–1154) is the most illustrious of the Norman rulers of Sicily. In 1127 on the death of his cousin William I, the Duke of Apulia, he appeared before Salerno, and Pope Honorius II was reluctantly obliged to invest him with the duchy of Apulia also. Between 1127 and 1130 the principalities founded by Norman chieftains in Italy and Sicily were united under his rule. Taking advantage of the double election of Anacletus II and Innocent II to the Papacy in 1130, Roger II promised to support the former and received from him 'the crown of Sicily, of Calabria and Apulia, the principality of Capua, the honour of Naples and the protectorate of the men of Benevento'.<sup>26</sup> He was crowned king at Palermo.

The German and Byzantine empires united against the new kingdom of Sicily from time to time, and both Roger II and his successor had to struggle against aggression by these empires. Papal policy, which had only reluctantly subscribed to the creation of the kingdom of Sicily, fluctuated between support for the German emperor against Sicily and for Sicily against the emperor. In his European confrontations, Roger II made considerable use of his Sicilian Muslim troops.

Roger II's main military involvement with the world of Islam consisted of his naval campaigns against, and eventual occupation of, several coastal towns in North Africa. The Norman fleet was organised under two Greek-born admirals, George of Antioch and Christodulus, the latter referred to as 'Abd-ar-Rahmān an-Naṣrānī in Arabic chronicles. George of Antioch had formerly served the Zīrid Tamīm, and had an intimate knowledge of the topography of the North African coast. He joined the service of Roger II in 1112. The Norman fleet under these two admirals contested naval supremacy of



the Mediterranean with the North African Muslim states. In 1113 Zīrid ships had raided Naples and Salerno, and Muslim corsairs were making the sea unsafe for European merchants and pilgrims. The internecine conflict among the North African Muslim states, however, gave the Normans their chance.

The first attempts of Roger II, between 1118 and 1127, to gain a foothold in North Africa were unsuccessful. During the chaos created in North Africa by the predatory Arab tribe known as Banū Hilāl, a petty Arab principality, that of Banū Jāmi', had established itself at Gabes. The Zīrid Yaḥyā b. Tamīm evolved a *modus vivendi* with it, but his son 'Alī attacked it, and the Banū Jāmi' appealed for help to Roger II who, as he had trade relations with them, sent a fleet to their aid. This first Norman expedition was unsuccessful; it also started a course of hostility between the Normans and the Zīrids. 'Alī b. Yaḥyā appealed to the Almoravids for help, but died in 1121. He was succeeded by his son Ḥasan, who was to be the last of the Zīrids. In 1122 the Banū Maymūn, clients of the Almoravid 'Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn, sacked Nicotra in Calabria, massacred a part of its population and enslaved others. Roger II sent a counter-attacking fleet against Mahdiyya and Dimās commanded by George of Antioch. The fleet was partly damaged in a storm, and such part of it as reached Mahdiyya was ineffective; of the 300 Norman vessels only 100 survived to return to Sicily. In 1127 the Banū Maymūn again raided the Norman realm, attacking Patti, menacing Catania and landing temporarily near Syracuse where they captured booty and prisoners. Against the Almoravids, Roger II had to seek the alliance of Raymond-Beranger III, the Count of Barcelona.<sup>27</sup>

In the meantime the Zīrid power was hopelessly declining. In 1135 the Ḥammādid Yaḥyā b. 'Abd al-'Azīz advanced against Mahdiyya. Against him the Zīrid Ḥasan sought the help not only of the predatory Banū Hilāl, but also of his recent enemies, the Normans. These allies of his defeated the Ḥammādids,<sup>28</sup> and a relationship which was more than a truce was established between the Zīrids and the Normans. From 1135 onwards Roger II's policy was to leave Mahdiyya alone for the time being and, under the pretext of chastising the corsairs, to send expeditions against other points in North

Africa where the Zīrid writ no longer ran. In 1135 a Norman naval force occupied Jerba and held its population to ransom.

From 1143 onwards the Norman expeditions against North Africa became continuous. A Sicilian naval force tried unsuccessfully to occupy Tripoli where the Banū Maṭrūḥ had asserted their independence from Zīrid rule. On its way back the Norman force ravaged the Ḥammādid port of Jijelli. In 1144 the Normans attacked Barashk (Bresk) and the islands of Kerkenna. In 1146 they succeeded in defeating the Banū Maṭrūḥ and occupying Tripoli, the first major North African town to fall into their hands. In the actual conquest of Tripoli by the Normans there was much looting and destruction and many Arab and Berber women were seized, but soon a general amnesty was proclaimed; those who had fled the city returned and the citizens were granted their civic, personal and religious rights on payment of *jizya*.<sup>29</sup>

In 1147 a usurper seized power at Gabes. The emir of Banū Jāmi' appealed for help to Ḥasan the Zīrid, while the usurper asked the Normans for help. Ḥasan occupied Gabes and executed the usurper. This gave Roger II the chance to break his peace with Ḥasan. A Norman fleet under George of Antioch occupied Mahdiyya. This was in a way Roger's token participation in the Crusade. As in Tripoli, an amnesty was soon proclaimed in Mahdiyya and the city soon settled down to the same busy life it had led under the Zīrids on whom the sun had now set.

In 1148 the Normans also occupied Sūs, Sfax and Gabes. Though George of Antioch died in 1152, the Norman conquest of the coastal towns of North Africa continued; and in 1153 Bone was occupied. Apart from Tunis and one or two other towns, all the coastal towns of North Africa paid tribute to Roger II, who added to his titles that of the King of Ifrīqiyya.<sup>30</sup> Roger II's rule on the North African coast was as benign for the Muslims as it was in Sicily. He restored cities, furnished capital for the merchants, was charitable to the poor and appointed acceptable *qādīs*.<sup>31</sup>

While Roger II's navy was occupying the coast of Ifrīqiyya, there is evidence to believe that he pursued a policy of *détente* with the Fāṭimids of Egypt, with whom his trade relations must have been satisfactory.<sup>32</sup> Commerce and grain trade



between Sicily and the states of North Africa seems to have continued even during their long years of hostilities.

Roger II died in 1154 at the age of 58. The security, peace and prosperity which prevailed in his dominions was in sharp contrast to the general situation in Europe. He reformed the judicial code and enforced law and order. In improving the civil administration he made use of capable men speaking various languages and belonging to various religious persuasions. Only towards the end of his rule did he become intolerant; in his earlier career, in fact during most of his reign, his conduct was such that Ibn-al-Athīr praised him for protecting and liking the Muslims.<sup>33</sup> He was surrounded by Muslims among others, and is said to have had Muslim women in his harem, as well as Muslim slaves and eunuchs in his entourage. He delighted in the company of learned Muslims, and in his last fourteen years spent much time in scientific speculation in the Arab tradition. There were even unfounded rumours among both Muslim and Christian subjects of his kingdom that he was a crypto-Muslim.<sup>34</sup> Of the five principal luminaries of his court two, Abū-s-Salt Umayya and Idrīsī were Arabs, and the other three, Eugenius, Nilus Doxopatrius and Theophanes Cerameus were Greeks.<sup>35</sup> Though he knew both Greek and Arabic, he preferred to use Greek in his diplomatic correspondence, even with Muslim rulers.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time he was a champion of the Christian church. He built two magnificent religious monuments, the Palatine Chapel and the Cathedral at Cefalu. It has been suggested that he wished to be in control of a 'national' church, a concept in which Byzantine influence can be traced, where the aim was to combine temporal and religious authority.<sup>37</sup>

Roger II was succeeded by his son William I (1154-1166). Much less energetic than his father, he left the business of state to his ministers. In 1154-5 the Byzantines occupied Bari, Trani, Gionenezzo and Molfetta. Papal forces also marched against him; and there were revolts by his own vassals. In 1156 however, William subdued the rebels and reoccupied the towns which had been occupied by the Byzantines. Pope Hadrian IV had to treat with him and confirmed him in his Sicilian and Italian dominions.

His chief minister Maio (Majone) gained in power and influence after 1156. The party led by Maio and Queen Margaret was the party of the palace and was opposed to the party of the nobles, some of whom had participated in the earlier rebellion. The party of the palace included palace functionaries, of whom many were Muslims and played an important part in the financial administration of Maio.<sup>38</sup> The nobles blamed Maio for the strong action which had been taken against them by William I after the rebellion, and for being denied a share in the government. Maio was also unpopular among the citizens of large towns who blamed him for depriving them of their municipal liberties and for taxing them heavily. Finally there was a conspiracy and a great uprising of the party of the nobles and other elements who assassinated Maio in 1161. They even seized the person of the King, but had to release him under popular and ecclesiastical pressure. William I then successfully dealt with the nobles both in Sicily and in southern Italy.

The disorder in Sicily had its counterpart in North Africa. William I lost the empire of North African outposts built by his father. Though Tinnīs in Egypt was sacked in 1154 by the Normans,<sup>39</sup> this was really a continuation of the momentum generated by the North African conquests under Roger II. A North African reaction to that momentum now set in. 'Umar b. al-Ḥusayn al-Furriyānī revolted successfully at Sfax in 1156. The example of Sfax was followed by the islands of Jerba and Kerkenna. In 1158 the Banū Maṭrūḥ reasserted their rule at Tripoli. At Gabes Muḥammad b. Rashīd, who had been appointed *qā'id* by the Normans, revolted successfully against them. In 1158 William I sent twenty galleys to suppress a revolt at Zawila, with some success. By 1159, however, the relentless march of the Almohad leader 'Abd-al-Mu'min sealed the fate of the Norman possessions in North Africa. In 1160 'Abd-al-Mu'min starved the Norman garrison of Mahdiyya to submission and brought the Norman adventure in North Africa to a close.

William I was by nature indolent, possibly cruel; but it is debatable whether he deserved the title 'Bad' applied to him by Falcandus, an advocate of the party of the nobles. William was averse from politics and inclined more than his father to



the pleasures of the semi-Muslim life of court and seraglio; like his father he loved to discuss literary and philosophical questions with learned Greeks and Muslims.<sup>40</sup> Before his death in 1166, William I had appointed his queen Margaret regent of the kingdom; but her power was usurped by a Council of Ten established by the rebellious nobles. An Englishman, Walter Ophamil, who was appointed Archbishop of Palermo in 1169, succeeded in depriving the Council of Ten of the power it had usurped, and returned to the administrative policies of Roger II and William I. He retained the confidence of William II when he reached majority and took the reins of the government in his hands.<sup>41</sup>

William II (1166–1189) unlike his father was popular in the realm and is remembered in history as William the Good. He was a minor of thirteen years at his accession. His actual reign begins from 1171. Against the advice of his ministers he sent expeditions across the Mediterranean against Muslim possessions. This policy was primarily religious. Although it aimed at exerting pressure for the protection of Sicilian trade with the Levant, its basic objectives were to keep communications open between Europe and the Holy Land and to extend Norman protection to the Christian communities of the Levant. William II was one of the first to assume the cross at the beginning of the Third Crusade, though he could not personally participate in it and died in 1189. However, his admiral Margaritus was the hero of Christian exploits near Laodicea.<sup>42</sup>

During his reign there were several harassing raids against the Egyptian coast. There was a Norman raid against Damietta in 1169. In 1174 a powerful Norman fleet of 280 galleys carrying 30,000 men and 1,500 horses attacked Alexandria, but could not make any effective headway against the fortifications of the city or the Egyptian military force organised by Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn (Saladin).<sup>43</sup> The Norman fleet raided Tinnīs twice between 1175 and 1178, and during the latter of these raids sacked the town. During 1180–1 William II sent a naval task force against the Balearics which were then under the occupation of the Almoravid Banū Ghāniya. This expedition did not achieve any results as the Normans' allies the Genoese made a separate peace with the Banū Ghāniya. About

the same time a treaty was concluded between William II and the Almohad Abū-Yūsuf Ya'qūb.<sup>44</sup> The treaty was motivated perhaps more by mutual commercial interests, than by a common hostility towards the Banū Ghāniya. We have Ibn-Jubayr's evidence of navigation and trade between Norman Sicily and Andalusia, though most of the vessels involved were probably of Genoese ownership.<sup>45</sup>

Devoid of the vigorous qualities of the Normans, a recluse among the pleasures of his harem and his pleasantries, William II never led his forces personally on the battlefield, but he was a shrewd politician and his reign was peaceful and tranquil. He was also, like his father and grandfather, familiar with Arabic speech and learning, and he built the Monreale and La Cuba. Dante chose to place him in Paradise.<sup>46</sup>

William II died childless. According to his wish, Constance, a daughter of Roger II, who was married to the German Emperor Henry VI should have succeeded to the throne of Sicily. But the Sicilian nobles divided themselves into three factions; and in 1190 Tancred of Lecce, an illegitimate son of Duke Roger of Apulia, and thus a grandson of Roger II, was placed on the throne by Matthew of Ajello who became the Chancellor. There were several revolts against Tancred, including a fateful one by the Muslims of Sicily, which kept him occupied during the first year of his reign. After a massacre of the Muslims of Palermo, most of them took to the mountains of the interior and occupied a number of strong fortresses. Their numbers were swelled by Muslim serfs, escaping from their Norman overlords and joining them.<sup>47</sup> This revolt, and its suppression, was, as we shall see later, the beginning of the end of the Muslim presence in Sicily.

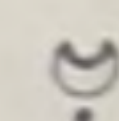
The Third Crusade arrived at the doorstep of Sicily and Richard Coeur-de-Lion occupied Messina, but Tancred came to terms with him. Henry VI was in the meantime planning to occupy Sicily, claiming the inheritance of his wife Constance. He concluded treaties with Genoa and Pisa to neutralise them and in 1191 laid siege to Naples and Salerno, while the empress Constance installed herself in the palace of Terracina. The emperor had to return to Germany, however, because of an epidemic which had broken out in his army, and the empress was seized by the citizens at Salerno and handed over to



Tancred of Lecce who had to set her free on pressure from Pope Celestine III.

Tancred died in 1194. He was not without intellectual capacity, was familiar with the Greek language, and like his predecessors was steeped in Arab-Byzantine culture.<sup>48</sup> William III, a minor, succeeded his father Tancred with his mother Sibylla acting as regent. Henry VI marched south again in 1194, concluded a treaty with the Lombard towns, obtained the help of the fleets of Pisa and Genoa, and with swiftness and ease conquered the kingdom of Sicily, ending the Norman chapter of the history of the island.

## ARAB INSTITUTIONS IN THE NORMAN COURT AND ADMINISTRATION



Arab influence rather than Byzantine was predominant in the organisation of the Norman court and in its titles, functions, customs and ceremonies. Three of the Norman kings of Sicily actually assumed Arabic titles; thus Roger II called himself al-Mu'tazz-bi-llāh; William I was al-Hādī bi-amri-llāh and William II was al-Musta'izz-bi-llāh. These Arabic titles appeared on their coinage and in their inscriptions.<sup>1</sup>

Documents and decrees of Roger II's court were issued in Latin, Greek and Arabic. Such Arabic or bilingual (Greek and Arabic) rescripts which he did not personally sign bore his *'alāma* or motto in Arabic according to the usage of Muslim rulers. This motto was based on a Qur'ānic verse,<sup>2</sup> praising God and thanking Him for His beneficence. On various documents he called himself *al-malik al-mu'azzam al-qiddīs* or 'the great and holy (or venerable) king'. His coinage bore his Arabic title in imitation of the Fāṭimids, as well as a Christian title in Arabic, *nāṣir an-naṣrāniyya*, 'defender or helper of Christianity'.<sup>3</sup> His Arab panegyrist 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān of Trapani called his royal villa of Mare-dolce near Palermo, the Mu'tazziyya.<sup>4</sup> In the bilingual documents of the chancery, however, his titles, though to the same effect, were written in Greek.

The crown Roger II wore was of a Byzantine model, but his famous mantle, still preserved in Vienna, was that of an oriental emir with an embroidered kūfic inscription and the motif of tigers attacking camels. Contemporary and near contemporary writers, both Muslim and Christian, describe the prominence of Muslim influence in Roger II's palace and court. One gets the impression that the whole tenor of life was oriental rather than Western. In many ways he lived like



a Muslim monarch with a harem, eunuchs, and palaces which remind one of Andalusian pleasure palaces and other luxuries of contemporary Islamic life.<sup>5</sup> Chalandon, however, regards Amari's description of Roger II as a 'baptised sultan' an over-statement and asserts that in religion as in politics and administration it was Greek influence that was supreme with the Normans.<sup>6</sup> The existence of the harem has also been questioned.

It would be more accurate to say that in Roger's court there was a symbiosis of Greek, Arab and Latin cultural traditions and influences. The Sicilian administration was strongly bureaucratic with a pronounced oriental flavour which was Byzantine as well as Arab. Roger's physicians were Arabs. His secretaries were many-tongued and dealt with records in Latin, Greek and Arabic, as did also the large staff of expert clerks. His court was a meeting place of north and south and east and west.<sup>7</sup> His supreme tribunal was modelled on the Byzantine example and the brilliance of his court ceremonial on the Arab model. Like the Muslim rulers his court officials included *jānibs* (aides de camp), *hājibs* (chamberlains), *silāhīs* (equerries) and *jāmadārs* (wardrobe attendants).<sup>8</sup> Like the Fāṭimids of Egypt and the 'Abbāsids of Baghdad, the Normans of Sicily had *fiṭyān* (pages) in their palaces who had close and direct access to the Norman sovereign.<sup>9</sup>

Under William I and William II Arab influence remained strong at court. They 'were, if anything, more Muslim to the outward view than Roger'.<sup>10</sup> Both spoke Arabic fluently. Around William I there was an escort of Norman knights as well as a bodyguard of Negroes commanded by a Muslim.<sup>11</sup> There was the same mixture in the army; Norman knights and Muslim soldiery in bright clothes. The King himself had adopted to a great extent the style of living of the conquered Muslims. His docility, which may have been a result of his eclecticism, gradually led to the enfeeblement of his energy and to the erosion of his authority.<sup>12</sup> A part of his palace was reserved for women, pages and eunuchs.<sup>13</sup> He was hardly seen by his people; and passed his days sumptuously secluded in his palace with his women. He went out in richly decorated boats on the sea, rivers and canals accompanied by his favourite

women and Arab musicians. The Norman barons and high officials followed the example of their sovereign; and the suburbs of Palermo were covered with luxurious villas.<sup>14</sup>

Ibn-Jubayr who visited Sicily during the reign of William II throws some light on the survival of the Arab heritage in his court and in Sicilian life in general. William II's 'alāma bore the Arabic inscriptions 'Praise be to God. It is proper to praise Him'. He patronised physicians and astrologers of whom some must have been Muslims, since Ibn-Jubayr prays that God may preserve the Muslims from this seduction, though he also compliments William II for the use he made of the industry of the Muslims.<sup>15</sup> He notes that in the display of his pomp William II resembled a Muslim monarch.<sup>16</sup> The concubines and hand-maidens in his palace were all Muslims and secretly converted other Christian women, who entered the harem, to Islam.<sup>17</sup> Even outside the palace the Christian women of Palermo followed the fashions of Muslim women, wrapped their cloaks around them, were veiled, wore oriental ornaments and adorned themselves with perfume, and put henna on their fingers.<sup>18</sup> The eunuchs were presumably converted to Christianity by this time, but they were still crypto-Muslims, and the king overlooked the fact that they offered Islamic prayers.

Muslim emirs, Greek logothetes, Norman justiciars and ecclesiastical dignitaries worked side by side in the *curia regis* or *magna curia*, which was the principal organ of the Norman government. From the reign of Roger II onwards, the *curia* is frequently mentioned in the documents. From among the members of the *curia*, the king chose his most intimate counsellors, known as *familiars*. In the documents one occasionally comes across Muslim names – one Abū-l-Qāsim was a member of the *curia* and one of the *familiars*<sup>19</sup> – but it cannot be said with any certainty whether such persons were still Muslims or had been converted to Christianity.

*Amīr* or *amiratus* was a title, which was given even by Robert Guiscard to several officers.<sup>20</sup> In the Norman kingdom of Sicily the highest dignitary in the bureaucracy still had the Arabic title *amīr al-umarā'* and had precedence over the Chancellor.<sup>21</sup> This title was probably abolished after the assassination of Maio.<sup>22</sup>



The Muslim element was much more prominent in the financial administration of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily than the Greek.<sup>23</sup> The Arab financial department, the *dīwān al-tahqīq* was retained by the Normans under its vulgar Latin nomenclature, *dohana de secretis*. Amari regards this department as well as others like *dohana baronum* as modelled on Fāṭimid institutions<sup>24</sup> while other scholars like Gregario see them as of purely Norman origin and akin to similar institutions in Norman England.<sup>25</sup> Other Arab departmental institutions which survived in Norman times and were adapted to Norman requirements were the *dīwān al-mā'mūr* or treasury office, a sub-division of the *dohana de secretis*.<sup>26</sup> It maintained the list of *villeins* and the revenue due from each financial district. The *dīwān al-fawā'id*, another sub-division of the *dohana de secretis* concerned itself with the sales of land.<sup>27</sup> The *dohana de secretis* was collectively in charge of the entire financial administration of the realm; it supervised the centres of the treasury and maintained registers regarding different parts of the realm. In Sicily these registers were maintained in Arabic.<sup>28</sup> A number of Arabic terms were retained in the Norman administration. These included the Fāṭimid/Kalbite term *iqḷīm* for a military district;<sup>29</sup> and terms for various offices such as *ṣāhib*, *kātib* and *'āmil*.<sup>30</sup>

Under the first three Norman rulers the Fāṭimid coin *rubā'ī* remained in use and influenced the minting of its Norman counterpart *tari* which had a similar shape and the same intrinsic value.<sup>31</sup>

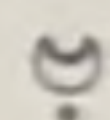
Several Sicilian documents of the Norman period called *defetari* or *deptari* (Arab. *dafātir*) have survived. These are records of the areas of cultivable and uncultivable land and lists of *villeins* with details of the kind of services they performed, maintained in the *dohana de secretis* and *dohana baronum*. Several of these, some dating back to the reign of William II, are in Arabic, while others are in Greek.<sup>32</sup> Such records were kept by the Byzantines and later by the Fāṭimids and probably also by the Kalbites from whom the Normans seem to have inherited the institutions, though similar registers were also in use in Norman England.<sup>33</sup>

Recruitment of Muslims into the Norman army dates back

to Roger I. With them the Normans also took over some features of the Muslim art of war. Arab military engineers worked for the Normans. They manufactured mobile siege towers and mangonels. In the architecture for the fortification of Bari, Roger II used the skill of Arab engineers.<sup>34</sup>



## THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY UNDER THE NORMANS



The principal difference between the Spanish *Reconquista* and the Norman conquest was in the underlying policies; the Spanish Catholics were intolerant, whereas the Normans, at least to a considerable extent, were tolerant and assimilative.

Norman tolerance and magnanimity went hand in hand with military zeal from the outset. Roger I's tolerance was in part due to *raison d'état*; the Muslims possibly constituted the majority of the population of the island at that juncture. Moreover Muslim troops, as Muslims, could be confidently counted upon in his Italian wars. The Muslims who renounced Islam and accepted Christianity fell from his favour. The author of the life of St Anselm informs us that he forbade Catholic priests to convert his Muslim troops.<sup>1</sup>

The economic consequences of the Norman conquest, however, were detrimental for all classes of the Muslim population of the island from the beginning. During the conquest there was considerable destruction of Muslim villages and of the livestock owned by them. The Muslims of the rural areas and the Jews had to pay a capitation tax for which the Islamic name *jizya* was retained.<sup>2</sup> This explains the first wave of migration from Sicily to Zīrid Ifrīqiyya. The second wave probably consisted of Muslim soldiery, troops of various *junds* who accompanied the retreating forces of Tamīm's sons from Sicily to North Africa. The feeling of the Arab élite is epitomized by the complaint of the poet 'Abd-al-Ḥalīm: 'I loved Sicily in my first youth; she seemed to me a garden of immortal felicity. But, scarce had I come to mature years, when behold, the land became a burning gehenna.'<sup>3</sup>

Muslims of the Sicilian cities who surrendered after fighting signed agreements with Roger I, which in varying degrees

determined their status and their religious and economic safeguards. They were known as *maḥallāt*, and did not pay *jizya*. Palermo received very favourable terms; not so Catania which was given as a fief to a bishop, and the Muslims of which were enrolled as *villeins*. The villages and the countryside fell into the hands of the Normans without much resistance and signed no agreements which could safeguard their rights. Muslims of the countryside sank into the class of serfs and *villeins*; and the term *agarenius* acquired a double meaning, Muslim or *villein*.<sup>4</sup>

Under Roger I Muslims of various ethnic origins, Arabs, Sicilian converts and men of mixed origin with curious names like Aḥmad b. Roma or 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān b. Francu, were scattered throughout the island. They showed the greatest density, of course, in Val di Mazara, but they had substantial colonies in Val di Noto; and some had settled even in the predominantly Christian Val Demone. In Palermo there was a concentration of Arabs who traced their lineage to the ancient tribal groups of Yaman, Qays and Quraysh, as well as of scions of such eminent Berber tribes as Hawwāra, Lawāṭa, Zaghwa and Zanāta. There was also a sprinkling of Muslims from the orient and from Spain. Soon, however, the ethnic and religious map of Sicily began to change. Under Roger I a steady flow of immigrants from Normandy and northern France had already begun to settle in Sicily. In the early Norman documents one finds several French names among Norman feudatories, prelates and public officials. Even more significant was the massive immigration from Italy; and it was during this period that Italian became the popular language of the island. Great colonies of Lombards sprang up in Sicily.<sup>5</sup> Some of the original Christian population of Val Demone adhered to the Greek orthodox church and Byzantine culture. It had come to the aid of the Normans during the conquest, and in return the Normans restored some Greek churches and monasteries. In the twelfth century the Latin and the Greek rites existed side by side; but gradually the former gained more and more influence.<sup>6</sup> Roger's relations with the pope had improved considerably after the occupation of the island. In Sicily the Muslims had converted several churches into mosques. One of the earliest acts of Roger I



was to reconvert them into churches and to appoint an archbishop,<sup>7</sup> who was a Greek. By the Papal Bull of Gregory VII (1083) this Greek archbishop was replaced by a Catholic archbishop. In 1088 Pope Urban II visited Sicily; but differences persisted between the pope's and Roger's views and policies on the Christianisation of Sicily.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the pope favoured the conversion of Muslims for pietistic reasons, for Roger I Christianisation meant not the conversion of Muslims, but rather the steady immigration of Christians from the mainland, and the primacy of Christianity as the official religion of the island.

The colonisation of Sicily by the Lombards continued throughout the Norman period. By the end of the twelfth century there were large Lombard colonies in Butera, Piazza, Randazo, Vicari, Capizzi, Nicosia and Maniaci. These perpetrated all sorts of atrocities against the Muslims.<sup>9</sup> There was also immigration of Venetian, Genoese and Amalfian merchants and of other elements from all parts of Italy, and this continued throughout the thirteenth century.<sup>10</sup> In due course it led to the total loss of landed property by the Arabs, as it was transferred to the church, the clergy, the feudal nobility and the Christian farmers. The Norman feudal élite fitted with ease into the area of wheat-growing *latifundia*; while in some areas orchards and gardens were replaced by ranches owned by the new aristocracy and the monasteries.<sup>11</sup>

The institution of slavery continued under the Normans, but the slaves were now mostly Muslims. In an Arabic document of 1095 there is mention of 'abīd which may refer to Negro slaves.<sup>12</sup> The Muslim captives taken by Roger I during the conquest of Sicily were sent to the mainland and sold there as slaves.<sup>13</sup> The Muslim *villeins* toiling in the land, mentioned in the Arabic documents as the *rijāl al-jarā'id* and in the Latin as *servi glebae*, had a status more or less like that of slaves. This status was hereditary. They had no personal freedom, they were also obliged to perform military service when called upon, and had to submit to forced labour.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to the *villeins* were the *homines* who were free persons, and had the right of perpetual and free possession of their land. Unlike the *villeins* they were free to dispose of their belongings as they pleased. Among the *boni homines*,

some were Muslims. These included civil officials concerned with donation, testament, sale and accord, etc. They assisted the notaries and judges. Sometimes they served as arbitrators between two litigating parties.<sup>15</sup>

During the reign of Roger II, the policies initiated by his father continued, including the military policy of making the maximum use of Muslims in the army. During the greater part of his reign the conversion of Muslim soldiers was discouraged, as they were more useful and dependable as Muslims in his wars in Italy. The Muslim soldiery still retained something of the order and formation of the Arab *jund* and served both as infantry and as horse archers.<sup>16</sup>

The greater part of Roger II's reign was one of tolerance towards the Muslims; they played a significant rôle in the administration and deeply coloured the very essence of the new Norman culture in Sicily. All this changed, however, towards the end of his reign. By the close of 1153 he launched a policy of religious persecution. The reasons for this reversal of religious policy were several; some personal, such as the death of three of his sons within a period of nine years, and his own ill-health; some political, such as the mobilisation of power in the Adriatic by Manuel Comnenus, and what affected the Muslims most, the rise of the Almohads in North Africa as a power to be reckoned with. In the last years of his reign he introduced a policy aimed at conversion of Muslims and Jews to Christianity.<sup>17</sup>

During the reign of William I, the treatment of Muslims by the Norman barons can be partly attributed to social intolerance.<sup>18</sup> Though they were loyal to the King, they had to pay the price of the Almohad victory at Mahdiyya by being disarmed in Palermo. Being disarmed they fell an easy prey to the wrath of the Norman barons and the Lombards in 1161 when some eunuchs of the palace and the Muslim officials were executed. The Muslims of Palermo barricaded themselves in their quarter of the city, but suffered very heavy casualties.<sup>19</sup> The lot of the Muslims of rural areas during this rebellion of the barons was even worse. To escape massacre, many Muslims fled to the forests and mountains or to the towns of the south where there were still large concentrations of their co-religionists.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand in the army of



William I, which finally suppressed the rebellion, there were still a substantial number of Muslims.

During the minority of William II, while his mother Queen Margaret was Regent, the Chancellor was faced in 1167 with a complaint from Christian elements in Palermo that several Muslims converted to Christianity, holding important positions and enjoying the protection of the eunuchs of the palace, had reverted to their original faith. The principal person charged was Robert of Calataboiano, who was accused along with other Muslims of carrying on with Christian women and young boys. In spite of the Queen Regent's intercession, the Chancellor had to proceed with the prosecution of the accused for apostasy and adultery; and they were punished to the satisfaction of the Christian population of the capital, especially the Lombard immigrants.<sup>21</sup>

Ibn-Jubayr who visited Sicily in 1184-5, during the reign of William II, throws interesting light on the situation of the Muslim community at that stage in history. The treatment of the Muslims vacillated between tolerance and mistrust. At the court the eunuchs, whether professing Muslims or crypto-Muslims or Muslims converted to some unascertainable degree of Christianity, had the confidence of the King, and were often raised to high positions in the administration of the state.<sup>22</sup> Some of the eunuchs and pages converted to Christianity offered Muslim prayers in secret.<sup>23</sup> It is significant that some of them chose to conceal their faith. The name of Ibn-Jubayr's crypto-Muslim informant was 'Abd-al-Masīḥ ('servant of the Messiah'). The Friday assembly was banned; but that of the two 'ids permitted, and on these occasions the Muslim reader of the sermon mentioned the name of the reigning 'Abbāsid caliph of Baghdad as the head of the Muslim community.<sup>24</sup>

In Palermo the Muslims still possessed several mosques and their own markets. They had their own quarters in the city, apart from the Christians. Among them were thriving merchants, carrying on a brisk trade. Some of the mosques were still used as religious schools. On the whole, however, the general Muslim populace regarded the Muslim officials in Norman service with distrust and avoided them. The Muslims of Palermo felt insecure about their property, their honour and the future of their children.<sup>25</sup>

There were Muslims in villages, on the farms and in several cities such as Syracuse and Cefalu. At Termini they had a large suburb of their own with their mosques. Solanto near Palermo had sacred tombs which attracted pilgrims, and close to it was a spring, with some sacred or animistic associations, known as '*ayn al-majnūna* ('the spring of the mad woman'). The mosque at the highest point of the town was described by Ibn-Jubayr as one of the finest in the world. Alcamo, near Trapani, was a large town with markets and mosques and a population which was totally Muslim.<sup>26</sup> Near Messina Muslims lived with their property and their farms, well-treated by their Christian neighbours; while in Messina itself, except for a few craftsmen, there were hardly any Muslims.<sup>27</sup> The condition of Muslims in various cities of Sicily during the peaceful and tolerant rule of William II seems to have been satisfactory, if not entirely secure. They lived in their own quarters, administered by their own *qā'ids* and *qādīs*, and worshipped in their mosques.<sup>28</sup>

Yet even in the benign reign of William II the Muslims of Sicily were apprehensive of the approaching doom of their community in Sicily. The more far-sighted among them feared the same fate for themselves as that of the Muslims of Crete, where after the Byzantine reoccupation the Muslim element had disappeared completely. The Muslim intelligentsia in Sicily saw the only solution to its problems in migration to other Muslim lands. Daughters were given in marriage preferably to visitors or travellers from other Muslim countries. Trapani was the principal port of Muslim emigration to Andalusia and North Africa.<sup>29</sup>

Even William II would occasionally force a leading Muslim to renounce his faith. Sometimes the Norman officials would force a shaykh like Ibn-Zur'a to adopt Christianity. Sometimes a *qā'id* like Abū-l-Qāsim b. Hammūd could be suspected of being in league with the Almohads and disgraced. The temptation towards as well as the pressure in favour of conversion to Christianity were disrupting the highly patriarchal Muslim family. A son rebelling against the authority of his father or a wife against that of her husband easily turned to Christianity.<sup>30</sup> Whereas in the countryside the conversion of the *villeins* was a direct process, in the cities it worked from



top to bottom. The conversion of a Muslim *qā'id* or *ḡa'im* could be followed by the conversion of others under his jurisdiction.<sup>31</sup> According to a rescript of Pope Alexander III addressed to the Archbishop of Palermo, a Muslim accused of raping a Christian woman was fined or beaten. On the other hand the Christians seized with impunity women, girls or boys of the Muslims on the pretext of converting them to Christianity and exacted large sums as fines from rich Muslims.<sup>32</sup>

The tolerance of the house of Hauteville, however, led eventually to a strong reaction of intolerance among the Christians of the island. Five years after the visit of Ibn-Jubayr the ethnic and demographic map of the island had changed irreversibly at the expense of the Muslims. In the riots of 1189 the Muslim element of the population was a visible target owing to its different dress, customs, manners and religion. Some of the Muslims still owned considerable property or had influential posts in the bureaucracy. 'At any moment of political or economic crisis these anomalous citizens were likely to be made a scapegoat.'<sup>33</sup>

During the period of general anarchy between 1189 and 1194 the situation for the Muslims of Sicily became very precarious. Tancred of Lecce had very little of the tolerance and grace of his predecessors. Long before his accession to power he had, in 1160, led raids of extermination against the Muslims of Butera.<sup>34</sup>

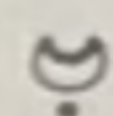
Before Tancred could consolidate his position, there was a massacre of the Muslims of Palermo in 1189; and the remnant took refuge in the mountains of the west-central part of the island where they rose in rebellion. Their number has been estimated at about a hundred thousand, including women.<sup>35</sup> They organised themselves under the leadership of five chiefs. The revolt lasted from the close of 1189 to October 1190. Then partly by force and partly by persuasion most of the Muslims of Palermo were made to return to their homes, and the *villeins* who had joined them to their servitude under their overlords. When in 1190 the Muslim rebels faced the fact that Tancred's position was becoming consolidated and decided to submit to him, the days of the Muslim presence in the island must have appeared to be numbered. The period of the bureaucratic

symbiosis was over. Surviving Arabic documents of the age of Roger I and Roger II are equal to those in Greek or those in Latin. 'Under William I the relation is one to seven, under William II one to ten, in the short reign of Tancred all are in Latin.'<sup>36</sup> Gradually the remaining Muslim population of Palermo and of other cities melted away through emigration to other Muslim lands or through conversion to Christianity, though some individual Muslims must have remained in Palermo, and Frederick II's knowledge of Arabic and of Arab culture can be traced to them.<sup>37</sup> In the triangle of the Val di Mazara there still survived a substantial number of Muslims in a state of servitude, as a low social class. In 1199 Pope Innocent III sent the Muslims of Sicily a letter of admonition and persuasion. A similar letter was again sent by the Pope in 1208.<sup>38</sup>

As the power of the sovereign weakened towards the end of the Norman period, the survival of Islam in Sicily became difficult, because the feudal hierarchy, which held the remaining Muslim population in tutelage, entered into association with the Catholic Church, which in turn regarded conversion to Christianity as an act of piety.<sup>39</sup> Such of the Muslim élite as resisted conversion chose to migrate. The Muslim emigration from Sicily to North Africa, Spain and the Orient had already begun in 1068 and had continued throughout the Norman conquest. After a brief lull, it had increased with the repression of 1153 and the massacres of 1160-1, and continued under William II. The situation was acerbated further by the massacres and revolt of 1189-90.



## ARAB INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY DURING THE NORMAN PERIOD



The Arab intellectual stream had flowed into Sicily from North Africa and Spain, and after the Norman conquest it flowed back to the Muslim countries as Sicilian savants, scholars and poets continued to migrate there. Several Sicilian scholars and poets, however, chose to remain in the island and some, including the illustrious Idrīsī, enjoyed Norman patronage.

Although, unlike the physical and philosophical sciences, the traditional intellectual disciplines declined among the Muslims during the Norman period, the tradition of these latter continued for some time. The famous Sicilian *muqri* and grammarian ‘Abd-ar-Raḥmān b. ‘Atīq, generally known as Ibn-al-Faḥḥām (1030–1122), has to be distinguished from his namesake ‘Abd-ar-Raḥmān b. Abī-Bakr of Saragossa, the poet.<sup>1</sup> Ibn-al-Faḥḥām migrated to Egypt where he was regarded as an authority of *qirā’a* (recitation of the Qur’ān). His two most famous works on Qur’ānic study and on the Traditions were *at-Tajrīd fī bughyāt* and *Mufradāt Ya’qūb*.<sup>2</sup> Ibn-al-Faḥḥām’s pupil ‘Uthmān b. ‘Alī of Syracuse was a scholar of the Qur’ān as well as a Traditionist. Another Sicilian Abū-‘Abd-Allāh Muḥammad wrote a verse paraphrase of the Qur’ān.<sup>3</sup>

The most eminent of religious and ethical scholars of Norman times was Ibn-Zafar (Muḥammad b. Abī-Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Zafar), remembered by the honorific titles of *Hujjat ad-dīn* and *Burhān al-Islām*. He was either of Sicilian origin or a Meccan who visited Sicily. He also wrote on grammar and philology. His most famous work is *Sulwān al-muṭā’* which has been translated into English, Italian and Turkish.<sup>4</sup> The work is of the genre of *Fürstenspiegel* or ‘Mirrors of Princes’, divided into five parts, in a style reminis-

cent of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*. Altogether thirty-two works have been attributed to Ibn-Zafar, of which four have survived including a commentary on the Qur’ān. He travelled through the Maghrib and finally settled down in Syria where he died in 1170.<sup>5</sup>

Other Qur’ānic scholars include Abū-Ṭāhir aṣ-Ṣiqillī, grammarian and reader of the Qur’ān and the author of *al-Unwān fī qirā’āt*. Muḥammad b. Abī-l-Faraj of Mazara (d. 1036) was a scholar of Qur’ānic recitation and of Arabic grammar and syntax. He moved to Cairouan, studied there and probably settled down there.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most eminent Traditionists of this period, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī at-Tamīmī (d. 1142) of Mazara, was also a renowned scholar of Mālikī law and scholastic theology, and had studied at Mahdiyya. Most famous of his writings was the *Kitāb al-mu’allim*, a commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim. This commentary itself led to a number of other commentaries upon it. Another of his works is a commentary on the traditions compiled by Jawzaqī. It has been reported that Ibn-Tumart, the Mahdī who founded the Almohad movement, was among his disciples.<sup>7</sup>

Other Sicilian Traditionists of the period include: Abū-l-Ḥasan ‘Alī, who was appointed a *qāḍī* of Mecca, and whom Sam’ānī counts in the chain of his preceptors;<sup>8</sup> Abū-Bakr b. Muḥammad, who learnt *ḥadīth* in the Hijaz, lived for some time at Granada and died in Egypt in 1080; Ibn-al-Bājī (d. 1201), traditionist and Mālikī jurist; ‘Abd-al-Karīm b. Yaḥyā who was also a grammarian; and many others who migrated to other Islamic lands. Several pages, presumably in the Norman court, also studied the Traditions and other religious sciences.<sup>9</sup>

Several Sicilian scholars of jurisprudence also migrated to other Muslim countries. Ibn Makkī (Abū-Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. Khalaf), famous jurist and lexicographer, and a disciple of Ibn-al-Birr, was a *qāḍī* in Sicily. At the beginning of the Norman conquest he migrated to Tunis. The unpublished *Tathqīf al-lisān* is attributed to him, and has led to the conclusion that a Maghribī dialect was spoken in Sicily in the eleventh century.<sup>10</sup> Abū-Bakr Muḥammad b. Ḥasan ar-Rubā’ī taught Mālikī law in Sicily, but later left for Ifrīqiyya and Egypt and died in 1142. Another jurist, ‘Uthmān b. Ḥajjāj (d. 1149),



a native of Sciacca in Sicily, settled down at Alexandria, and left behind him works on Mālikī law.<sup>11</sup>

The philosophical and physical sciences fared much better under the Normans, and received active patronage. This fact was well-known to the Muslim Orient. Arab historians compliment Roger II for his knowledge and patronage of sciences.<sup>12</sup> According to Idrīsī, Roger II was not only interested in practical sciences such as mathematics and public administration, but also very much so in geography as a science which offered information about lands, their produce and their people.<sup>13</sup>

*Nuḡḥat al-mushtāq*, the universal geography by ash-Sharīf al-Idrīsī was produced on the order and under the patronage of Roger II, and for this reason it is also called the Book of Roger (*al-Kitāb ar-Rujārī*). It originated as the explanation of a large silver planisphere the author himself had made. The book was completed in 1154. It is interesting that in contrast to Sicilian Muslim intellectuals who migrated to North Africa and Spain, Idrīsī, a Spanish-Arab by birth, seasoned in his North African travels, decided to settle down at the Christian court of Sicily. He wrote another geographical work for William I.<sup>14</sup>

Roger II also believed in occult sciences.<sup>15</sup> As elsewhere in the Arab world, the Muslim astronomers in Norman Sicily confused astronomy with astrology. But there still were astronomers of high calibre, including Muḥammad b. 'Isā b. 'Abd-al-Mun'im who was also a geometrician.<sup>16</sup> Two Arab astrolabes of the period have survived.

For most of the Arab bellettrists, philologists, anthologists, grammarians and poets Norman Sicily offered no intellectual stimulus, no security of livelihood and no promise of a future; and most of them left the island. Most eminent in this group of emigré intellectuals was Ibn-Qaṭṭā' (1041-1121), born during the Kalbite civil war, of a family of distinguished ulema that had migrated to Sicily from Portugal.<sup>17</sup> He commenced his philological and grammatical studies in Sicily, and among his teachers had the famous savant Ibn-al-Birr. During the Norman conquest he migrated first to Andalusia, then to Ifrīqiyya and finally to Egypt, where he became for some time tutor to the sons of the Fāṭimid vizier Badr al-

Jamālī. In Egypt he taught prosody, grammar and lexicography. Most of his writings have been lost, including a history of Sicily, notes on the six canonical collections of *ḥadīth* and several other works.<sup>18</sup> Only bits and pieces of his most valuable anthology of Sicilian Arabic poets, *al-Durrah al-khaṭīra min shu'arā' al-Jazīra* have survived.<sup>19</sup> It gives selections of the verses of poets with some biographical notes and has been cited or used in later anthologies like 'Imād al-Iṣfahānī's *Kharīdat al-qasr*.<sup>20</sup> Ibn-Qaṭṭā's commentary on some verses of al-Mutanabbī has also survived,<sup>21</sup> as have some other of his works.

Of North African origin was Ibn-Bashrūn ('Uthmān b. 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān b. 'Abd-ar-Razzāq b. Ja'far b. Bashrūn), compiler of another anthology of poetry, *al-Mukhtār*, as well as of a work on chemistry;<sup>22</sup> he held a responsible office in Norman bureaucracy. Most eminent of Arab philologists of the Norman period was Ibn-al-Mu'allim ('Alī b. Ibrāhīm), also a grammarian, a lexicographer, a calligraphist and a scholar of medicine. A grammarian, Abū-Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Ḥasan was imprisoned by Roger I, and to gain his freedom he addressed a panegyric to him, some verses of which have survived.<sup>23</sup> Muḥammad b. 'Abī-l-Faraj al-Kattānī (1036-1118) was another distinguished grammarian and lexicographer.<sup>24</sup>

The best part of the surviving Sicilian Arabic poetry was written in the Norman period by poets who emigrated from the island, but a few stayed on and became panegyrists of the Norman rulers.<sup>25</sup>

During and after the Norman conquest, many Sicilian poets migrated to the comparatively distant but culturally akin Spain where the 'party kings', the *mulūk at-tawā'if*, successors to the Umayyad Caliphate, ruled over various regions at that juncture in history. The kings, who included luminaries such as al-Mu'tamid in Seville and al-Mu'taṣim in Almeria, received the poets cordially.<sup>26</sup> Among the poets was Muṣ'ab b. Muḥammad al-Qurashī (b. 1032), a poet who influenced his younger contemporaries; he took refuge in the court of al-Mu'tamid.<sup>27</sup> Another Sicilian poet Abu-Sa'īd 'Uthmān b. 'Atīq left Sicily for Spain where he joined the entourage of al-Mu'taṣim.<sup>28</sup>



By far the most eminent of the Arab poets of Sicily who chose exile was Ibn-Ḥamdīs ('Abd-al-Jabbār Abū-Muḥammad b. Abī-Bakr al-Azdī).<sup>29</sup> He was born at Syracuse probably in 1055, and spent his youth in that town. It is possible that he participated in the struggle against the Normans during their conquest of the island. In any case he left Sicily for Spain in 1078 and took service under al-Mu'tamid in Seville. Although it is not likely that he took a part personally in the battle of Zallāqa in which al-Mu'tamid and his powerful ally the Almoravid Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn defeated Alfonso VI of Castile, he celebrated the victory in a panegyric. When the Almoravid conqueror put an end to the rule of al-Mu'tamid in Seville, Ibn-Ḥamdīs was left without a patron, as the austere Almoravid court had no place for poets, at least at that stage. Ibn-Ḥamdīs left for North Africa, trying his fortune first at the Zirid court in Mahdiyya, then at the Hammādīd court in Bougie. There he wrote celebrating the victory of Muslims against Roger II's naval task force at Cape Dimas (1123). The evidence of a panegyric in praise of the emir of Majorca suggests that he may have spent in that island the last years of his life before his death in 1133. In these years of exile he recollected with deep sensitivity and nostalgia the landscape and life of his native Sicily and the plight of the Muslims there.

Ibn-Ḥamdīs uses rare words in his vocabulary and the influence of al-Mutanabbī on his style has been noted. In Spain he did not adopt the forms of either *muwashshah* or *ṣajal*, which were employed with such felicity by his contemporary Ibn-Quzmān; but he came in contact with the themes and modes of Andalusian poetry. With these he must have had some contact even in his youth in Sicily, since the influence of Spanish Arabic poetry had already reached there from North Africa. The true vigour of his verse is not to be sought in the romantic effusions of love, but rather in his chiselled descriptions of the particular, in his pictorial vocabulary, in the play of imagination and in the tendency towards refinement.<sup>30</sup>

Gabrieli has noted that the description of palaces, monuments and other subjects of art by Ibn-Ḥamdīs and other Sicilian Arab poets is completely in the tradition of the 'Abbāsīd poets. The descriptive features are blurred by

rhetoric. This can best be observed in the descriptions of the 'Abbāsīd and Hammādīd palaces by Ibn-Ḥamdīs.<sup>31</sup>

While most Arab poets chose self-exile, some stayed on in Sicily and attached themselves to the prospects of Norman patronage. They wrote poems in honour of the Norman rulers and in praise of their palaces and pleasures. 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān b. Abī-l-'Abbās of Trapani wrote in praise of the Favara.<sup>32</sup> His namesake 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad of Butera, who was also a Qur'ānic scholar, wrote poems in praise of Sicily and of Roger II's gardens and palaces.<sup>33</sup> Yet another 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān, the son of Ramaḍān, was a panegyrist of the same monarch.<sup>34</sup> The grammarian Abū-Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Ḥasan also eulogised Roger II in his *qaṣīdas*.<sup>35</sup> Abū-ḍ-Ḍaw' Sirāj b. Aḥmad wrote an elegy on the death of Roger's son.

Antithetical to the emigration from Sicily is the visit or immigration into Norman Sicily of a few poets and intellectuals from North Africa. A distinguished visitor was Ibn-Qalāqīs who visited Sicily in 1169 and stayed for over a year. In Sicily he enjoyed the patronage of the *qā'id* Ibn-al-Ḥajar in whose honour he wrote his *aṣ-Zahr al-bāsim* and several panegyrics. He has left a record of his stay in various Sicilian towns; and his unpublished letters include one addressed to one 'Giordano', one of William II's ministers.<sup>36</sup>

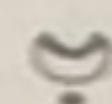
Several minor Arab poets were also attached to the Norman court including Ibn-al-Barūn<sup>37</sup> and 'Abd-al-'Azīz b. Ḥusayn. The latter, while claiming Aghlabid descent, chose finally to emigrate to Egypt, where he had a successful career at the Fāṭimid court and died in 1165.



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 FREDERICK II AND THE MUSLIMS
 

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With the conquest of Sicily by the German emperor Henry VI in 1194, the Norman period in Sicilian history came to an end and the Swabian period began. Though the Muslims and Jews of the island had submitted to him, Muslim riots began on his death in 1197. With the disappearance of the Norman court eunuchs the urban Muslims and rural *villeins* had lost the only influential sympathisers they had, and were now entirely at the mercy of Christian barons and overlords. The tithes imposed for the Crusade proclaimed by Pope Innocent III caused much resentment among the Sicilian Muslims. In the unsettled conditions which followed the death of Henry VI, bands of Muslims roamed around the island to seize what they could; and as their revolt gathered momentum, they captured some villages and fortresses.<sup>1</sup>

The Sicilian-born Queen of Henry VI, Constance, was crowned in Palermo in 1198, jointly with her three year old son Frederick II. She died later in the same year and Frederick became the ward of Pope Innocent III. Frederick's childhood and boyhood influences included some exposure to the Arabic language and Islamic culture. This fact leads one to the conclusion that even after the suppression of the rebellion of 1189-90 and the emigration which followed, a residue of Muslims had lingered on in Palermo, culturally significant enough to impress the young Frederick. Western sources assert that he could understand and speak Arabic; Eastern sources are silent on the point.<sup>2</sup>

Chaos and civil war continued in Sicily during Frederick's childhood. The two main factions were German (under Markward von Anweiler) and Sicilian-Norman. The German faction had the support of Pisa and of the Sicilian Muslims.

The Norman faction had the support of the Pope. At the age of seven Frederick II fell into the hands of Markward who, however, died soon after. So far Frederick's life had been one of destitution and poverty. Not much is known of the next five years of his life, but by the age of twelve he was already skilled in the exercise of arms and horsemanship, and interested in intellectual pursuits. This last quality of his has been attributed to his contact with the Muslims of Palermo as well as with the Papal legate Gregory of Galgano.<sup>3</sup> On his fourteenth birthday (26 December 1208) Frederick II came of age and was married to a bride of the pope's choice, Constance of Aragon. She was then twenty-four, and had already reigned as a queen. Knights, court ladies and troubadours came to Sicily in her retinue, and under her influence Frederick II was transformed from a rough soldier into a polished monarch.

By 1211, Otto IV, the Guelf emperor of Germany, had occupied the mainland part of Frederick II's kingdom, and had been invited by the Muslims of Sicily to invade the island. On the verge of his invasion of Sicily he was informed that at the General Council at Nuremberg he had been deposed and Frederick II had been elected emperor. After being crowned emperor Frederick took a vow to participate in a Crusade, a promise made to please the pope. By 1221 he had restored to most of Sicily the order and tranquillity which the island had not seen since the death of William II. Yet there was already a Muslim revolt in progress. Even after his coronation as emperor the Muslims saw little profit in submitting to him, but only greater poverty and vassalage. In 1219 Muslim bands had sacked the Spedale di San Giovanni de' Leprosi, almost at the gates of Palermo, and had taken the bishop of Girgenti prisoner. The strength of the Muslim rebels in 1221 has been estimated as between 25,000 and 30,000.<sup>4</sup> They were under a leader mentioned in the Christian chronicles as Mirabetto, and identified by Amari and others with Ibn-'Abbād of Banū 'Abs.<sup>5</sup> In Western Sicily the Muslims, taking advantage of the disorders in the kingdom, had seized and held lands for over twenty years. The Muslim strongholds included Entella and Giato, the last situated very close to Palermo. Henry of Malta, who was despatched by Frederick II, occupied Giato, but soon lost it again. In April 1222 Frederick met the pope at



Veroli and obtained his agreement to postpone the Crusade until the Muslims in Sicily were dealt with. The same year Giato was finally occupied by Frederick's forces and Ibn-'Abbād was taken prisoner with his Christian allies William Porco and Hughes de Fer. Ibn-'Abbād was executed, but there is an epical legend that his daughter continued the resistance at Entella and by a stratagem massacred 300 cavaliers of the emperor, who failed to lure her into a trap; finally she committed suicide to save her honour.<sup>6</sup>

The Muslim rebellion continued, and between 1222 and 1224 Frederick had to take vigorous military action against it. Several expeditions were sent simultaneously against the Muslims, who were driven to take refuge in higher mountains. There, as they became divided into separate groups under constant pressure, they were eventually forced to surrender piecemeal. Frederick now took the decisive and fateful step of liquidating the Muslim presence in Sicily by adopting the policy of transporting the Sicilian Muslims who had surrendered to be settled at Lucera in Apulia. Their number has been estimated at 16,000. As the Sicilian Muslims had received support from North Africa, Frederick's navy sacked Jerba and transported much of its population also to Lucera. He organised two other, smaller, Muslim colonies on the Italian mainland, at Girofalco and Nocera. Some Muslims still remained in Sicily and were to rise in rebellion about two decades later.

In 1225 Frederick II married Yolanda, the hereditary heiress to the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, and assumed the title of the King of Jerusalem in addition to his imperial titles. In 1226 Fakhr-ad-dīn b. ash-Shaykh, learned in dialectics, astronomy and falconry, arrived at Frederick's court as the envoy of the Ayyūbid sultan al-Kāmil to ask for the emperor's help against his brother al-Mu'azzam and his ally Jalāl-ad-dīn of Khwārazm. The Ayyūbid envoy had a prolonged sojourn in Sicily where Frederick made him a knight. Frederick sent a return embassy under Berard, the Archbishop of Palermo, and Count Thomas of Acerra with rich presents. This embassy succeeded in obtaining al-Kāmil's agreement that he would hand over Jerusalem to the emperor, if it could be wrenched from the possession of his brother al-Mu'azzam.

Gregory IX who had succeeded Honorius III as pope ex-

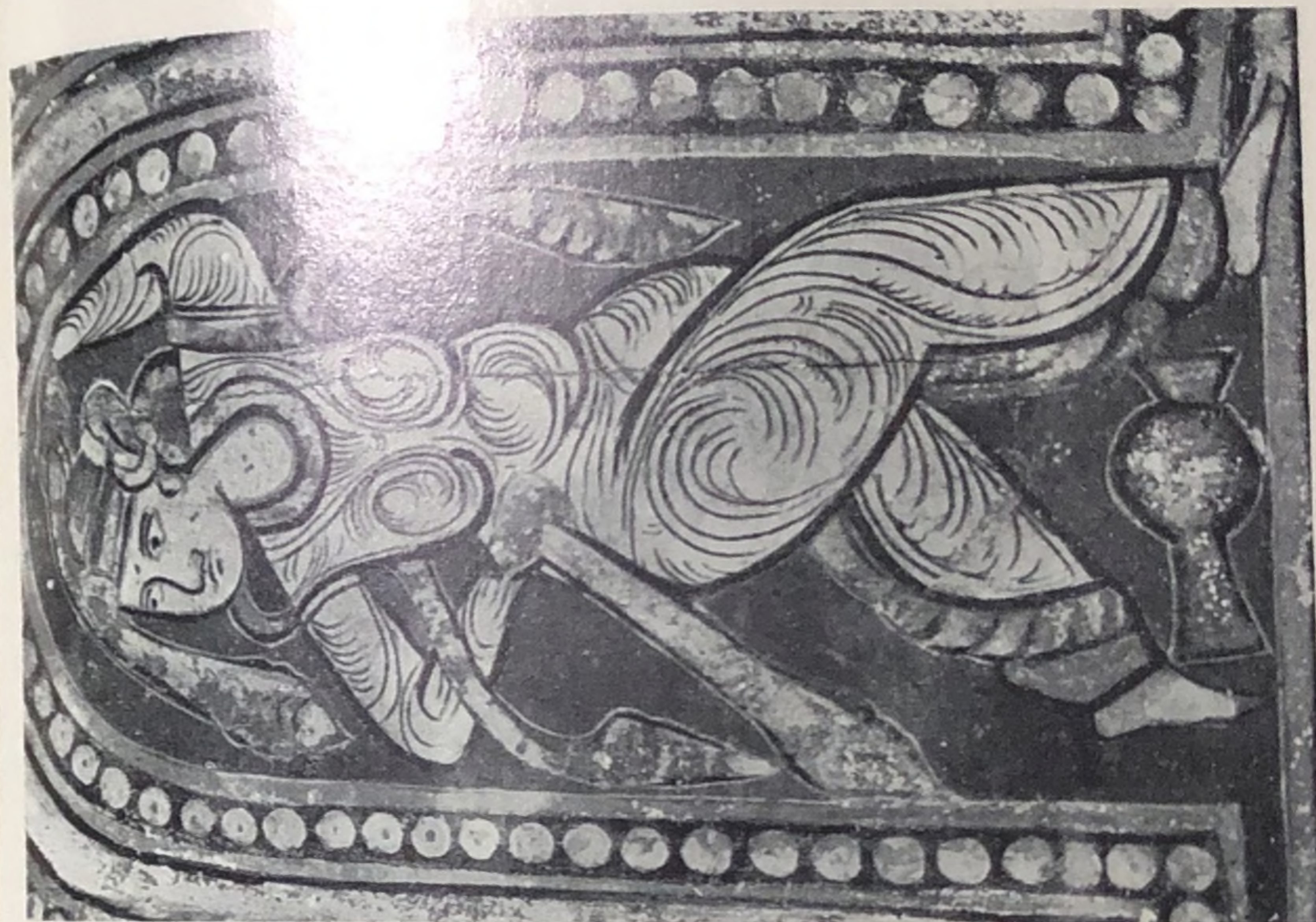


PLATE 5. Musicians and a dancer.  
From the ceiling of the Palatine Chapel.



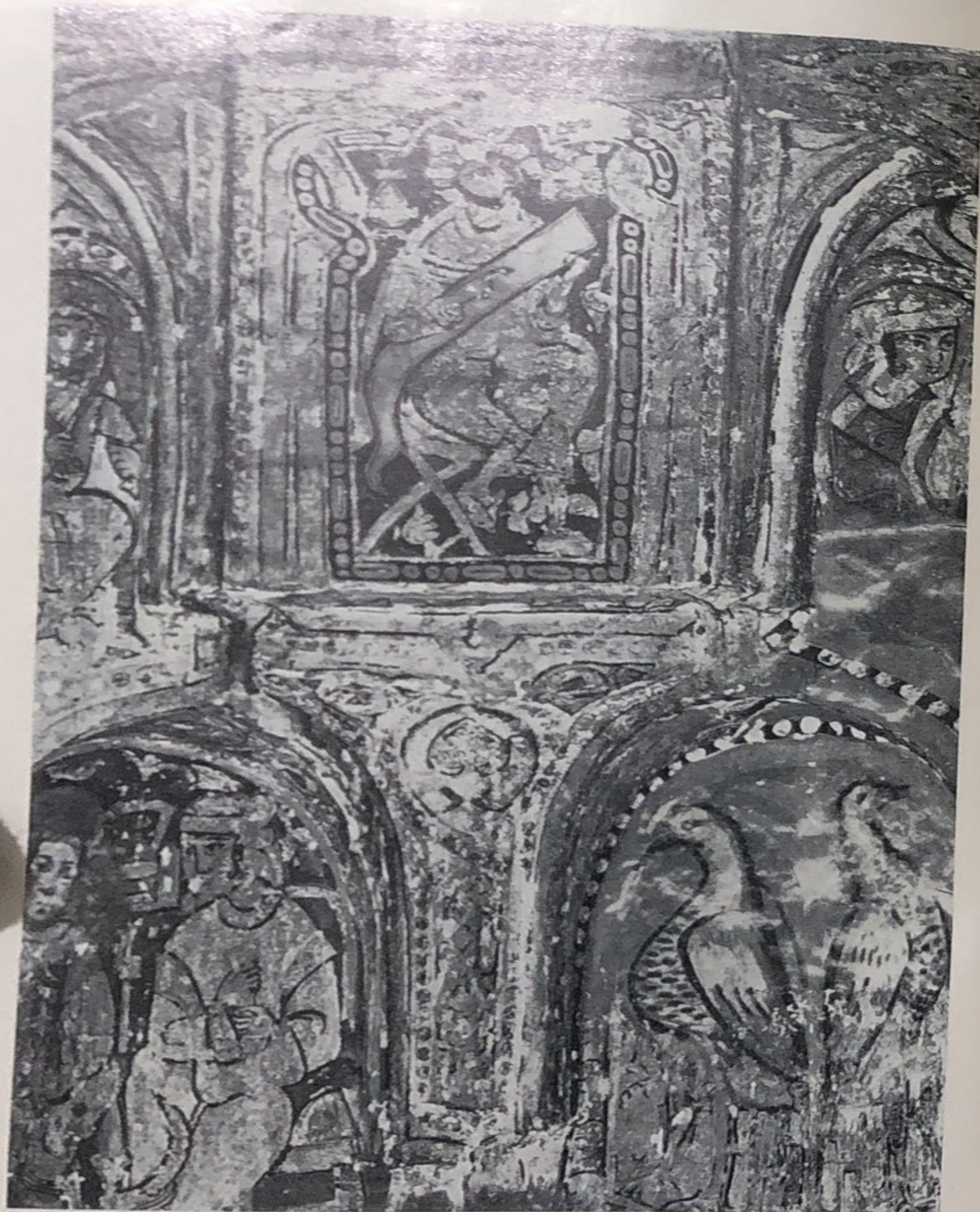


PLATE 6. Human figures and birds.  
From the ceiling of the Palatine Chapel.

communicated Frederick in 1227; and the same year the empress Yolanda died. In the same year al-Mu'azzam also died and al-Kāmil occupied Jerusalem and Nablus. Thirteen years after taking the Cross, Frederick finally decided to launch upon his Crusade, motivated principally by the political objective of gaining respect and prestige in Christendom despite the excommunication. On arrival at Acre Frederick II sent Thomas of Acerra and Balian of Sidon as envoys to al-Kāmil with princely gifts and a message that al-Kāmil should fulfil his promise to hand over Jerusalem. The subtle diplomatic negotiations which followed, were also intellectual battles of wits. Frederick and al-Kāmil shared common intellectual and political interests. Fakhr-ad-dīn was sent once again in a return embassy by al-Kāmil who refused to hand over Jerusalem at first on the plea of the wrath of Muslims at such an action. Al-Kāmil was aware of the pope's continued opposition to the emperor which meant dissension in the latter's camp. There was also trouble in Frederick's realm in Europe. His supply ships had perished at sea, reducing his army of 11,000 to the verge of starvation.

Al-Kāmil, however, was also faced with serious problems and needed the emperor's alliance. He had not succeeded in the siege of Damascus against his nephew. His flank was threatened by the Khwārazmians. Al-Kāmil accepted the proposals brought by Thomas of Acerra and Balian on their second visit, by which Jerusalem, Nazareth and a corridor to the sea at Jaffa were given to Frederick; while in Jerusalem the Aqṣā mosque and the Dome of the Rock remained under Muslim control. The treaty raised a storm in the Muslim world.

Frederick II's crusade was rather a progress which deepened Islamic influence on his intellectual and artistic taste and his life-style. The Dome of the Rock served as a model for his pleasure palace in Sicily, the Castel del Monte. He learnt the use of the hood in falconry at this stage. The ladies of his palace travelled in covered palanquins guarded by eunuchs like Muslim ladies.<sup>7</sup> There were Muslim pages in his retinue during the Crusade, and in his army there were at least a few Muslim soldiers.<sup>8</sup>

On his return to Europe he dealt effectively with the



internal and external enemies instigated by the pope; and in 1230 Pope Gregory IX came to terms with him and lifted the ban of excommunication. In 1231 he signed a truce with Abū-Ishāq, the ruler of Tunis, which stipulated that the island of Pantellaria should be governed by a Muslim nominated by the emperor.<sup>9</sup> Al-Kāmil sent an envoy interceding on behalf of the Sicilian Muslims to leave them in peace, or at least to let them emigrate to Egypt. This request did not lead to any practical results.<sup>10</sup> While the liberal Frederick's domestic policy remained firmly repressive of Muslims, he continued to exchange inter-cultural embassies with Muslim rulers of the Mediterranean region and beyond. In 1232 an embassy from the sultan of Damascus brought him a tent planetarium in which astral bodies, worked in gold and jewels, were moved in their circuits by a hidden mechanism.<sup>11</sup> Frederick even sent an envoy to the Assassin headquarters in Syria with gifts which were meant for the head of the Ismā'īlīs at Alamut. The Syrian chief detained the gifts.<sup>12</sup>

Gregory II placed Frederick under the ban of excommunication again from 1237 to 1241, accusing him, among other things, of having denied the Virgin Birth and of having declared Moses and Christ to be imposters.<sup>13</sup> Ibn-al-Jawzī holds a similar view of Frederick, and calls him a materialist who only made a sport of Christianity.<sup>14</sup>

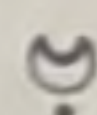
His domestic policy was firmly committed to ending all vestige of the Muslim presence in the island. The sending of exiles to Lucera in 1123-5 and later had not meant the total banishment of Muslims from the Sicilian population. Until 1242 Muslims still formed a substantial percentage of the population of Cefalu. There were still Muslim shepherds in the Val di Mazara. In 1243 the very small Muslim remnant which had remained in Sicily rose once again in a rebellion, rooted probably in economic problems, and resisted the imperial forces for three years; but they were finally starved into submission and deported to join their co-religionists in Lucera.<sup>15</sup> Islam and the Islamic presence in Sicily came to a total end. It is an irony of history that this end was brought about by an emperor who was a great admirer of Islamic intellectual and material culture, and was in many ways involved in it personally.

In 1244 Jerusalem fell to the Muslims. At the instigation of the patriarch of Antioch Frederick offered to lead another crusade, but this never materialised; the proposal was rejected by the Council of Lyons. Frederick was accused by his Christian contemporaries of associating more with Muslims than Christians,<sup>16</sup> a charge which in the perspective of history appears absurd, though it was not without factual basis. When he died in 1250, he was buried, wrapped in Arabian draperies in a mosque which had been turned into a cathedral.<sup>17</sup> The Muslim world and its historians called him, and even his successors, *al-anbarātūr*,<sup>18</sup> the Emperor, and this he was in every sense.

The Mamlūk sultan al-Malik az-Zāhir Baybars (1260-1277) sent the historian Ibn-Wāṣil on an embassy to the court of Manfred, Frederick's illegitimate son and the last Hohenstaufen ruler of Sicily. Manfred was a poet and patron of troubadours, as well as being open to all humane influences, Arab, Greek and Latin. Denounced by the pope as 'the Sultan of Lucera' and Lord of the Saracens, he was attacked by Charles d'Anjou, defeated and killed in 1266. Sicily, which had no Muslims now, passed into the possession of a new master, who could not tolerate even the harmless Muslim exile colony of Lucera.



## TRANSMISSION OF ARAB INTELLECTUAL LEGACY THROUGH SICILY AND ITALY



Compared to Spain the rôle of Sicily and Italy in the transmission of the Arab intellectual heritage, is a minor one. Yet the splendour of the Norman Sicilian kingdom in the twelfth century also had an intellectual component which coincides in time with the movement of the Italian renaissance of the twelfth century. This renaissance acquired new knowledge from Byzantium and from the Arabs of Spain and Sicily. Although as a channel of intellectual communication Sicily was relatively unimportant, nevertheless, as Haskins has pointed out, 'nowhere else, however, did Latin, Greek and Arabic civilizations live side by side in peace and toleration, and nowhere else was the spirit of the renaissance more clearly expressed in the policy of the rulers'.<sup>1</sup>

In the twelfth century the current language of science was Arabic; translations of Greek works from Arabic into Latin antedate those made directly from Greek. Arabic commentaries on the works of Greek masters profoundly influenced European thought. Many scientific works of the Arabs and Muslims themselves, especially in medicine, mathematics and astronomy also came to be translated. In Italy the Latin scholars came into close contact with the devotion to scientific knowledge which characterised the Arab and the Arabicised Jewish scholars, and imbibed this devotion. 'With interest came method: a rationalistic habit of mind and an experimental temper.'<sup>2</sup> Though Gerard of Cremona (1114-1187) belongs to the School of Toledo, it has to be remembered that he was an Italian and that his interest in Graeco-Arab medicine began in Italy, and led to his studies in Spain and the translation of a large number of books from Arabic.

The physicians of Palermo contributed to the development

of the medical school at Salerno, the early history of which is obscure. Translations of medical works from Arabic, in connection with the School of Salerno or otherwise, began in Italy as early as the eleventh century. Constantine the African, who was born at Carthage in 1015 and who died at Montecassino as a Benedictine monk in 1087, was one of these early translators. Another translator from Arabic was Plato of Tivoli, of Italian origin, who translated in Spain, in collaboration with an Arabicised Jewish scholar, Ibrāhīm b. Ḥiyya (Abraham bar Ḥiyya), the work of al-Battānī on astronomy; and the writings of al-Farghānī and others.<sup>3</sup> In 1127 Stefano of Pisa (or of Antioch), who translated the medical works of Haly Abbas, records that the scholars of medicine were found chiefly in Sicily and Salerno, and were either Greeks or persons familiar with Arabic. The doctors of Salerno, like Arab doctors, avoided dissecting the human body and dissected animals instead.<sup>4</sup> A Muslim physician Taqī ad-dīn made his way to Sicily from Bougie as late as the thirteenth century.

Under the splendid patronage of Frederick II, the Spanish and Sicilian streams of transmission of the Arab heritage to Europe combined and were to some extent fused, though the Spanish stream continued to relay this heritage directly from the Iberian peninsula also. Arabian influence at the court of Frederick II was stronger than Greek and was even more intensified after his visit to the East and the development of political and intellectual relations with the rulers of North Africa and the Near East. From Sicily this influence spread to some extent to northern Italy, Germany and Provence.<sup>5</sup> There was a large number of Greek and Arabic books in Frederick's library. He was also in personal contact or in correspondence with savants of Arab-Muslim sciences, and to these he referred for discussion various problems in mathematics, physics and philosophy. One such scholar was 'Alam-ad-dīn al-Ḥanafī, a learned mathematician and scholar who was sent to his court by al-Kāmil.<sup>6</sup> Frederick had sent to al-Kāmil a letter with seven questions, three of which concerned optics, and have been preserved along with the answers. Frederick II was also interested in zoology, medicine, mechanics, cosmography and mathematics; Michael Scot and Theodore of Antioch translated Arabic works on zoology



for him.<sup>7</sup> Giovanni of Palermo, who was one of Frederick's secretaries, was sent by him as an envoy to Tunis in 1240, and presumably knew Arabic well.<sup>8</sup> Giovanni's principal field of interest was mathematics. Another eminent mathematician of the court of Frederick was Leonardo Fibonacci, who had studied in Spain and the Orient, and had effectively introduced Arabic numerals in the West. Ibn-al-Jawzī, a Sicilian Arab philosopher, accompanied Frederick on his Crusade, and gave him lessons in logic.<sup>9</sup>

There was a vogue for astronomy at Frederick's court, the two favourite authors being Ptolemy, whose *Almagest* had been translated into Latin from the Arabic version as early as 1138, and al-Farghānī.<sup>10</sup> Frederick was also interested in astrology, alchemy and magic as known to the Arabs; because of this interest his protégé Michael Scot was placed by Dante in *Inferno*. Works on logic and physics translated from Arabic by Frederick's order were sent by him as a present to the University of Bologna. He instituted at the medical school at Salerno the first department of anatomy in Europe.<sup>11</sup> He also founded a university at Naples in 1224. Personally he had a deep interest in Arab philosophy. It has been suggested that the thought of Avicenna influenced him more than that of Averroes. He had also read Maimonides, and possibly knew some Hebrew.<sup>12</sup>

Most illustrious of the intellectual luminaries of Frederick's court was Michael Scot who was the connecting link between his court in Sicily and the great translation centre at Toledo. Michael Scot had worked at Toledo from 1217 to 1220; he then moved to Bologna, and later from 1227 onwards remained at the imperial court. There, beside other valuable works, he translated several of the commentaries of Averroes on Aristotle's philosophical writings. He also translated parts of the works of Avicenna. He prepared a recension of Gondisalvi's *De Divisione philosophiae* which in its turn was an elaboration of the work of al-Fārābī and others. The credit of introducing the works of Averroes to the West goes principally to Michael Scot.

Next to him, the most eminent savant at Frederick's court was Theodore of Antioch, sent to him by al-Kāmil in 1236. Theodore had studied at Mosul and Baghdad; and was steeped

in the Eastern tradition of Arab scholarship as Michael Scot was in the Andalusian. In the register of 1239-40 Theodore is found drafting the emperor's Arabic letters to the Sultan of Tunis.<sup>13</sup> Other translators and secretaries of Frederick's circle were Giovanni and Mosè of Palermo.

In 1232, Jacob, the son of Abā Mari who had migrated from France to Naples, translated into Hebrew the commentaries of Averroes on four books of Aristotle, and al-Farghānī's work on astronomy.<sup>14</sup> Another Jew, Yahūda Cohen, of Spanish origin, came to Italy in 1247. He is the author of a large scientific encyclopaedia in Arabic, which he also translated into Hebrew.<sup>15</sup> Averroes's *Kullīyyāt fī ṭ-ṭibb* was translated in 1255 by the Paduan Jew Bonacossa. Thirty-five years later Paravicius translated in Venice the Spanish Ibn-Zuhr's (Avenzoar) *Taysir*.<sup>16</sup>

Frederick II had posed scientific and mathematical questions to learned men on several occasions: for instance to Leonardo Fibonacci, in 1226; to Michael Scot in 1227; to al-Kāmil during his Crusade; and to several others. Yet his 'Sicilian Questions' have a special significance. They were sent earlier to Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Yemen, and were finally sent to the Almohad caliph 'Abd-al-Wāḥid II ar-Rashīd (1233-1242). The first question related to Aristotle's view that the world exists from eternity, and asked for an elaboration of the proofs he offered and the method of his discussion. The second question was about the scope of theological science and its primary postulates, if any. The third question concerned the validity or otherwise of the 'ten categories'. The full text of the fourth question has not survived but it began with a demand for the proof of the immortality of the soul. The fifth question related specifically to Islamic theology, asking for an explanation of the *ḥadīth* (Tradition) that the heart of the believer is between the two fingers of God. Ar-Rashīd's governor referred these questions to Ibn-Sab'īn ('Abd-al-Ḥaqq b. Ibrāhīm), a Murcian philosopher of Neoplatonic tendencies and a Ṣūfī. He was still a young man, but resided in Ceuta as a refugee, since his monism was suspected of being heretical. Between 1237 and 1242 he wrote his famous treatise *Al-Ajwiba 'an al-As'ila aṣ-Ṣaḡaliyya* (Answers to Sicilian Questions) in response to the emperor's questions. Though



the work is very learned, Ibn-Sab'in's youth manifests itself in the arrogant tone of the treatise, which throughout accepts the Islamic view and rejects Aristotle's view wherever it was incompatible with the former.<sup>17</sup> It is doubtful whether *Answers* made any impression on the medieval West. In any case in 1243 Ibn-Sab'in's brother 'Abd-Allāh was sent by the Almohad caliph as an envoy to Pope Innocent IV who may have been familiar with the 'heretical' nature of Frederick's questions.

Frederick's love for the Islamic and Greek intellectual heritage was inherited by Manfred. In 1260 Baybars sent the Shāfi'ite qādī Jamāl-ad-dīn Muḥammad b. Salīm to his court, and he recorded his impression of it. Manfred commissioned Bartolomeo of Messina to translate Aristotle's *Ethics* into Latin; and a German, Hermann, translated for him the Arabic commentaries on that work and other works of the Greek philosopher.<sup>18</sup> Even Charles d'Anjou, who, with his son, ended Hohenstaufen rule in Sicily and the Muslim colony at Lucera, has to be credited with the patronage of the translation of ar-Rāzī's (Rhazes') encyclopaedic medical work *al-Hāwī* or *Continens* by Faraj b. Sālim, a Jew of Girgenti; a commentary on the ninth part of this was written much later by Ferrari da Grado of Pavia, who was steeped in Arab medical science, and is said to have been the first medical book to be printed.<sup>19</sup>

Frederick's desire for the transmission of one of the Arab sciences connected with good living unfortunately ended with him. This was the science of falconry, on which a book had been written by his Arab falconer 'Maomin' (Mu'min?) and translated into Latin; the emperor made use of it in his own work on falconry, *De arte venendi cum avibus*.

As for the linguistic influence of Arabic, some minor traces of it survived in the Sicilian dialect of Italian, and consist of some loan words and certain expressions. The loan words pertain largely to rural objects, urban industry, clothing, diet and law and order.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the most reliable analysis of these loan words is the one by de Gregario and Seybold<sup>21</sup> who have counted about 200 Arabic loan words in the Sicilian dialect. Some of these had only local prevalence in Sicily. More interesting are those which spread to the Italian language of the mainland, and thence to other European languages. Here one has to be cautious. Sometimes the same Arabic loan word

is borrowed in Spanish or Portuguese as well as Italian; and it is difficult to say whether it passed into other European languages from an Italian or an Iberian source.

Out of the Arabic loan words which passed into Sicilian-Italian and then into other European languages, some of the more familiar are: Arabic *amīr* which became *Ammiragghiu* in Sicilian, *ammiraglio* in Italian and *admiral* in English; Persian *bāzār* (bazar) which passed through Arabic into Sicilian as *bazzariotu*; Arabic *qahwa*, Sicilian *café*, from which the word coffee is derived in English, and its cognates in almost all other major European languages; Arabic *kharshūfa*, which became *carcioffa* in Sicilian, *carciofo* in Italian and *artichoke* in English; Persian *kārvān* (caravan) passed through Arabic into Sicilian as *carvana*, into Italian as *carovana* and then to other Western languages; Arabic *fustūqa* is the origin, through Sicilian, of *pistachio*; Arabic *makhzan* became *magazzino* in Italian, and *magazine* in English; *tariff* is derived from Sicilian/Italian *tariffa* from Arabic *ta'rīfa*. Arabic *qā'id*, perhaps telescoped with Arabic *qādī* is borrowed in Sicilian as *caitu*, *caytu* or *gaitu* and in Spanish as *cayado* or *gayato*. Arabic *al-qubba* (dome) becomes *cubba* in Sicilian, but its French form *cupole* is derived presumably from one of its Spanish forms, *al-cubilla*. Arabic *līmūn* passed through Sicilian as well as through Spanish and Portuguese to become *lemon* in English; and *muslin* could have passed through either Spain or Sicily or both to denote the name of the cloth originally manufactured at Mosul.

In contrast to loan words, the question of the influence of Arabic poetry on Italian poetry is much more complicated. Amari saw some connection between the Arabic poetry written in Norman, possibly even Swabian, Sicily and the rise of early Italian poetry composed in Sicily. Poetry in the vulgar colloquial tongue was recited in the court of Frederick in the Provençal tradition, and this according to several orientalists was inspired by the Spanish Arab tradition, especially as expressed in the forms of *muwashshah* and *zajal*. The new rhymes were made popular at Frederick's court through recitation and singing.<sup>22</sup> The poet's theme is unrequited love, a theme which, though universal, is most frequently found in Spanish-Arabic poetry and in the work of the troubadours and the Italian poets of the *dolce stil nuovo*.<sup>23</sup> It has also been pointed



out that the metre of the early popular poetry written in Italy, for instance the carnival songs and the *ballata*, has a strong resemblance to that of the popular poetry of Arab Spain.<sup>24</sup> The cultivation of poetry in the Sicilian vulgar tongue may have found a model nearer home in the Arabic popular poetry composed in the island.<sup>25</sup>

These theories offer certain difficulties. Hardly any popular Sicilian Arabic poetry has survived,<sup>26</sup> the one exception being the *ṣajal* by 'Alī b. 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān. There has recently been some doubt about the Arabic inspiration of Sicilian popular poetry since in the surviving anthologies the composition of Arabic poetry seems to have ceased after the reign of Roger II; therefore three-quarters of a century had passed between the composition of the last surviving specimens of Arabic poetry in the island, and the birth of Sicilian popular poetry in the thirteenth century. The hypothesis of direct knowledge and imitation is therefore difficult to substantiate.<sup>27</sup>

Even more complex is the problem of determining the precise nature and extent of Dante's knowledge of Islam, its eschatology and its intellectual legacy. Miguel Asín Palacios propounded some decades ago a stimulating, but highly controversial theory that Dante's *Divine Comedy* is steeped in the influence of Islamic eschatology, and that it shows the influence of Abū-l-'Alā al-Ma'arrī's *Risālat al-ghufrān*, as well as of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and other works of Ibn-'Arabī; both abound in eschatological descriptions. Among Dante's sources there may have been also other similar learned as well as popular Islamic works.<sup>28</sup>

The theory was strongly criticised by Romance scholars, mainly on the ground that there is no direct evidence of Dante's acquaintance with these specific works. All the same Miguel Asín's theory has a tangible basis in the general Islamic influence on the *Divine Comedy* as well as his other works.<sup>29</sup> Dante was certainly familiar with several Latin translations of the writings of Arab philosophers, and steeped in the medieval polemical view of Islam. In his view of the Prophet of Islam he follows the traditional medieval Christian trend. In *Convito* he refers to Abū-Ma'shar al-Balkhī, al-Farghānī, al-Ghazālī and the Arab-Spanish astronomer al-Bīṭrūjī.<sup>30</sup> Avicenna is referred to in the *Divine Comedy* and in *Convito*.<sup>31</sup> There is

little doubt that Dante knew of these authors through Latin translations. He had a more intimate knowledge of Averroes with whose books he must have been familiar, as there are references to Averroes in several of his works.<sup>32</sup> He places both Avicenna and Averroes in Purgatory where he also places the Greek philosophers.

Dante's voyage to Paradise, Purgatory and Hell is allegorically the voyage of the soul through these eschatological regions. A similar allegory had been written by an anonymous author in Latin in the court of either Sicily or Catalonia towards the end of the twelfth century.<sup>33</sup> It is not certain whether Dante knew this work; but this much is certain, that allegorical eschatological journeys in Arab philosophical tradition had already formed the subject-matter of a southern European literary work, shortly before Dante. In his treatment of Purgatory, Dante may have been familiar with the Toledan *Collectio*.

A new dimension has been added, and the perspective of Dante's relationship to the Islamic tradition considerably sharpened, by the study of the *Book of the Scale* (*Il libro della Scala*) by Muñoz and Cerulli, especially the latter. The book was translated from Arabic into Castilian by Ibrāhīm al-Faḳīm, a Jewish doctor, in the reign of Alfonso X (1264–1277). It was then translated into Latin as *Liber Scalae Machometi*, and in Old French as *Livre de l'eschiele Mahomet*. Cerulli has noted and recorded not only the general analogies in structure and narrative between this originally Islamic eschatological work and the *Divine Comedy*; but also analogies in points of detail.<sup>34</sup>

Did Dante know the *Libro della Scala*, and if so to what extent? We have the following points in favour of an affirmative hypothesis. Fazio degli Uberti knew the book well. The book was known and read in Italy for several centuries; as late as the fifteenth century Roberto Caracciolo cites it at length. The fact that it was translated into and available in three European languages suggests its extensive diffusion in medieval Europe.<sup>35</sup>

Apart from the *Libro della Scala*, other versions of the Ascension of Muḥammad also existed in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe. One of these is the thirteenth-century Codex



of Uncastillo; another is the account recorded by Rodrigo Ximénez, also in the thirteenth century. A polemical, but comparatively more popular version of the Ascension was the one given by Ricoldo of Monte Croce, missionary to the Muslim orient, who visited Baghdad in 1291.<sup>36</sup> A poetic version of the Ascension, based on the *Libro della Scala* is in the *Dittamondo* of Fazio degli Uberti, a work with which Dante was almost certainly familiar. Even after Dante, there are fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian works showing familiarity with the story of the Ascension.

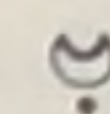
The conception of the Muslim Paradise was also made familiar by other sources such as the work of the Byzantine Theophonus which became known to Western Europe between the ninth and the eleventh century, and that of the Aragonese Rabbi Peter Alfonso in the twelfth century. In the same century Islamic eschatology was written about by Peter the Venerable. During the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries there were other writings of a polemical nature on the Islamic concept of Paradise.<sup>37</sup> It may be assumed that Dante must have been familiar with most of this literature.

The Muslim eschatological tradition, however, was by no means Dante's sole or even primary inspiration. The classical and the Biblical traditions had an even more profound and detailed influence on him. Some of the resemblances between Islamic and Dantesque eschatology are coincidental. The *Divine Comedy* is basically rooted deep in Christian dogma.

Cerulli has also suggested that Arabic subject-matter passed through medieval Spanish into the Italian *novella*. The *Novellino* of Fiorenziola and Doni can be traced to Arabic sources, but this field as a whole has yet to be studied adequately. The Arabic influence on the Italian narratives continued from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

In the late nineteenth century Valerga drew attention to certain similarities of ideas between the poems of Ibn-al-Fāriḍ, and the idealism of love in the poetry of Petrarch. But, as Gabrieli has observed, the nature of love in Ibn-al-Fāriḍ is purely mystical, that of Petrarch quite mundane. Petrarch probably knew something about Arabic poetry, presumably through some translations in Latin or Italian; but he did not find it to his liking.<sup>39</sup>

## FINE ARTS



Roger I, who spent three decades in conquering Sicily, paid tribute to the beauty of the Arab architecture in the island and the admirable skill of its construction. The baths of Cefalu and the remains of palaces and baths at the fortress of Maredolce are the oldest Arab architectural monuments still surviving in Sicily. The construction and decoration of these baths is not very different from that of baths in Muslim Spain and in 'Abbāsīd Iraq. Tortuous and bizarre lines and ornate Kufic inscriptions are seen interlaced with arabesques.

Apart from the remains of a mosque situated close to the Church of St John of the Hermits, no religious architecture of the Arab period has survived. The civil architecture also has almost entirely perished.

The one significant architectural monument which has survived as a relic of this period is the Favara (*fawwāra*) in Palermo, dated by Amari as belonging to the reign of the emir Ja'far (998-1019).<sup>1</sup> It was originally a group of buildings, around a courtyard, surrounded on three sides by an artificial pond. Its name, meaning a fountain, suggests that it contained fountains fed by water channelled from a mountain nearby. The ruin of a façade still bears some of its arcades, a feature one meets frequently in later Norman-Arab architecture. Apart from the Favara, however, one has to rely largely on the constructions of the Norman period in order to study in them the specifically Sicilian-Islamic architectural features.<sup>2</sup> A minor monument in Palermo, but of later date and much altered with the passage of time, is the Porto della Vittoria.<sup>3</sup>

According to the contemporary oriental and western evidence that has survived, the greater part of Sicily continued to have the stamp of Arab culture in its architecture until the



end of the twelfth century. Most of the towns still had mosques, baths and other sumptuous edifices in the Muslim style.<sup>4</sup> In Idrīsī's time Palermo was divided in two parts, the *qaṣr*, and the walled area which the Normans called the 'borgo'. The *qaṣr* area contained palaces, churches, mosques, baths, shops and the houses of great merchants. The Jāmi' mosque had been converted by the Normans into a Christian cathedral. The 'borgo' was almost another town. It was the old city, which included the *khālīṣa* of the Muslim period, and was spread over a large area, with homes, shops, baths and mosques.<sup>5</sup> Under Roger II Catania seems to have preserved its Muslim character even more than Palermo, and had several mosques, baths and inns.<sup>6</sup>

One still finds Arab features in the architecture of the coastal area of Amalfi and Salerno on the Italian mainland.<sup>7</sup> The alternation of dark and light stones in horizontal courses is a feature found commonly in the architecture of Cairo; though it could be of Roman or Byzantine origin. Some of the striped façades of Italian cities like Pisa, Genoa, Florence and Siena show this Cairene influence; while the Islamic minaret, especially of the North African variety, may have influenced the design of the Italian campanili.<sup>8</sup>

The so-called 'Pisan Tower' of the Norman royal palace in Palermo had its prototype in the *qaṣr al-manār* of the Qal'a of Banū Hammād, constructed in the eleventh century. The tower has a central square nucleus with a room on each floor. Around this nucleus, and between it and the external surrounding wall, there is a corridor.<sup>9</sup> In Italy, at Ravello, the basins at San Giovanni del Toro appear to have followed the Fāṭimid or Ayyūbid Egyptian design.<sup>10</sup> There may have been an Arab element in a number of ruined fortresses in the Val di Mazara such as those of Bonifato,<sup>11</sup> Entella, where the Muslim resistance lasted longest, and Calatamauro, as well as in some fortresses in Val di Noto.<sup>12</sup>

In the Norman architecture of Sicily the general aspect is Norman, but the Greek and Arab artists fashioned the mosaic work, beautified the interiors, painted the ceilings and walls and decked 'with a blaze of colour what in the north would have remained stately but austere'.<sup>13</sup> The linear features of the Cathedral of Monreale (c. 1174) show Byzantine influence

in the geometrical décor and circular interlacing, and Arab influence in the arabesque décor and polygonal interlacing. The richness and the delicate harmony of colours testifies to the predominance of oriental influences.<sup>14</sup> This style was copied at Salerno and several other places in southern Italy. In the cloister of the Cathedral of Monreale, there stands in the midst of Byzantine columns a Moorish fountain reminiscent of Granada or Seville.

The tomb of Bohemond at Canosa with its quadrangular plan and its dome seems to be a direct imitation of Muslim tombs. Two other churches in Palermo also show the predominance of Arab influence. These are St John of the Hermits, the construction of which was begun under Roger II; and San Cataldo, probably founded by Maio. St John of the Hermits has three naves, separated by thin columns of marble, ending in three little apses, the middle one longer than the other two. The sharp and raised arcades hang on the columns and support a dome. At San Cataldo the principal nave is surmounted by three domes, pierced with windows and supported by thin columns of marble on which rest the sharp-angled double arches. The walls are crowned with a crest of carved stone, a kind of decorative battlement outlining itself in fine dentils.<sup>15</sup>

In the Church of St Mary of the Admiral (la Martorana) and some other churches of the Norman period one finds the Arab pointed cusped arch, deformed at the summit. Among the architectural features of North African origin are the ornamented columns, with collars in bas-relief at the top. Two such columns are found in the Martorana, and two others are conserved in the Palermo museum. Of Egyptian origin is the sculptured decoration over the gates of the Martorana.<sup>16</sup>

The tradition and technique of garden architecture was transplanted into Sicily by the Arabs. Norman Palermo was surrounded by a belt of edifices set in the middle of gardens, such as the Zisa and the Cuba. The panegyrists of Roger II sing of gardens with canals, full of fish, and the birds flying over them.<sup>17</sup>

The stamp of Roger II's personality, as well as Arab influence in varying degrees, is visible in the various monuments of his age, the Cathedral of Cefalu, the Palatine Chapel at



Palermo, and the vaults of the porphyry of the Cathedral at Palermo where his name survives in an Arabic inscription.<sup>18</sup>

The Cuba (*qubba*) was constructed of well-cut limestone by William II. Rectangular in shape, its architectural details remind one of Hammādid palaces. Recesses rise from the floor to the ceiling and divide the façade. An ornamental moulding surrounds them, as in some of the Fātimid buildings at Mahdiyya. At the base the arches rest on four stages of staves. The upper parts are decorated with long niches crowned with conches of bright channellings. Underneath there is a frieze carrying a cursive inscription with the name of William II and the date 1180. According to its original plan, its interior consisted of a central and two lateral halls. The central hall, on which the rectangular niches opened, was surmounted by a dome; hence the name of the building. Constructions like the Cuba still survive in the Dār al-bahr of al-Qal'a.<sup>19</sup>

The construction of the Zisa (*al-'Azīza*, the Glorious) was begun during the reign of William I, and completed under William II. Like the Cuba it is also a rectangular building, but much more spacious. On the outside, in front and on the three other sides, it is decorated with three stages of cusped arches which are deformed at the top, and framed in a rectangle. On the façade there is a frieze with an inscription. In the interior there are two large halls, one on top of the other; smaller and less high rooms surround and flank the halls, forming an intermediate stage. The hall on the ground floor had a vault with niches. The hall on the first floor was covered with niches like the Hammādid palaces. The vault with awnings is a borrowing from Ṣanhajan architecture; but a novel feature in the vaulting of this Sicilian palace is the cantilever of stalactite (*muqarnas*) which covers not only the niches of the hall on the ground floor, but also those of lateral rooms above.<sup>20</sup>

There used to be a fountain in the niche opposite the entrance; water flowed in a marble channel into the hall, cooling the air. This motif of a water channel flowing into a hall dates back to the Ṭulūnid Fustāt. Leonardo Alberti who visited Sicily in the early fourteenth century has left behind an interesting description of the Zisa. Through a golden gate one entered a vestibule, from which through another similar door one passed to an enclosed quadrangle, which had small



PLATE 7. Coronation mantle of Roger II. Made at Palermo in 1133, the embroidered exterior a motif of a lion attacking a camel.



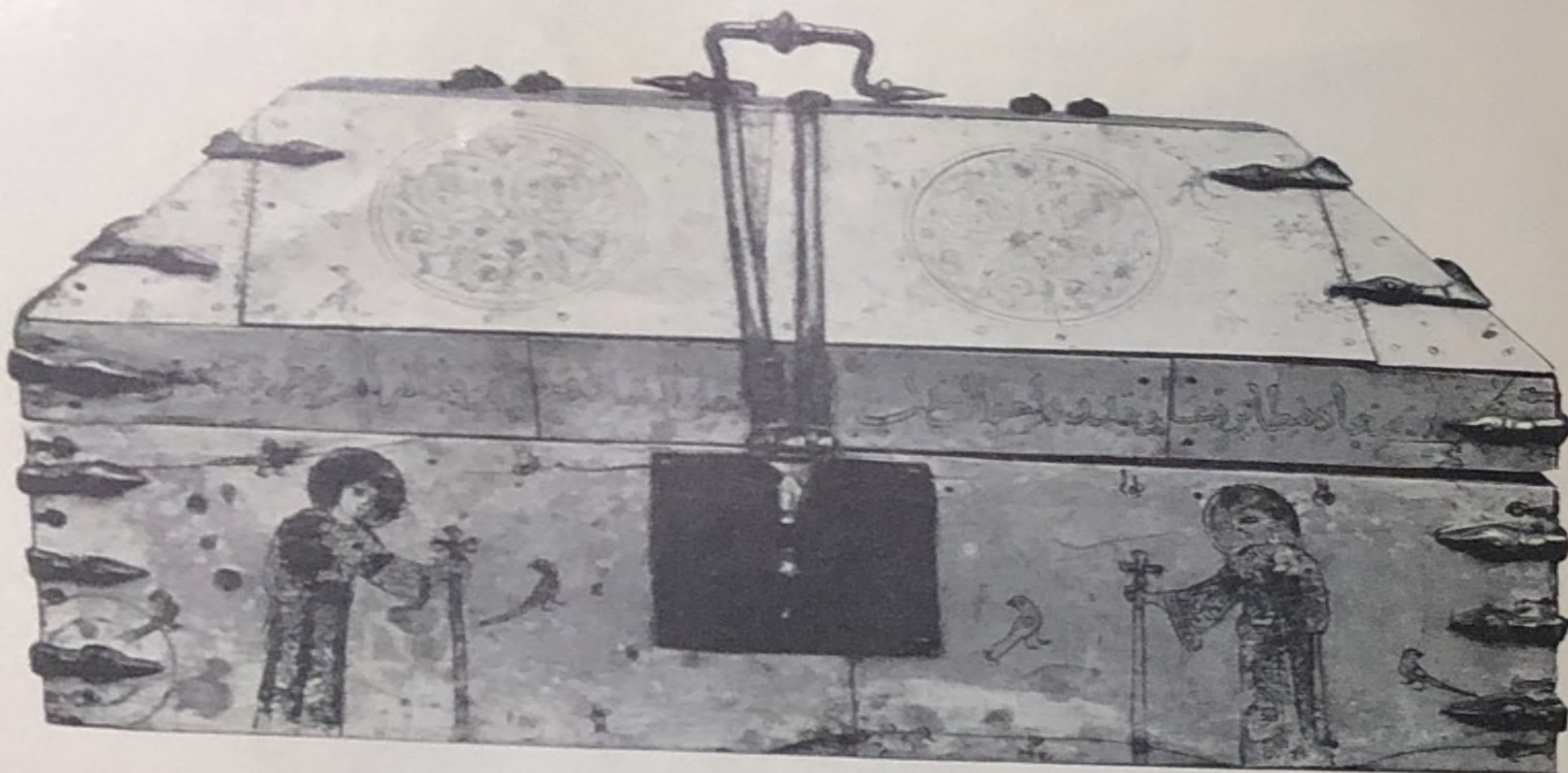


PLATE 8. Twelfth-century ivory casket, front and rear.  
The figures depicted are typical of Sicilian craftsmanship.

niches on three sides, and over which there was a ceiling in the form of an arched vault. In this enclosure the walls were covered with marble. It had a fountain with a marble basin. Over the fountain there were mosaic figures of an eagle and two peacocks and of two men with bows and arrows aiming at the birds. Pretty little streams carried the water from the basin of the fountain to other small basins until all the water flowed into a small pond, full of fishes, in front of the palace.<sup>21</sup> Interlaced Arabic inscriptions in both the Cuba and the Zisa indicate that it was largely Muslims who were employed in their construction.

The Cubola is a small pavilion situated in the garden of the Cuba. It invites comparison with the pavilion in the courtyard of the Fāṭimid mosque at Sfax. A hemispheric dome is based on an annular foundation resting on four stacks, on which rest four 'broken' arches.

The Palatine Chapel was constructed and decorated between 1132 and 1143. The ceiling of its nave, to quote Cott, 'consists of two rows of large rosettes, richly decorated with isolated figures and ornamental arabesques, and framed by octagonal stars, eighteen of which contain cufic inscriptions. . . . The lower portion of the ceiling, of the typically Islamic stalactite form of construction, is composed of innumerable superimposed consoles. The sloping side-aisle roof consists of a number of deep channellings ending in semi-circles decorated with busts of human figures. All the designs are outlined in black and the entire ceiling is painted in brilliant reds, blues, greens, white and gold'.<sup>22</sup>

Monneret de Villard has pointed out some similarity in the structure of the ceiling of the Palatine Chapel and that of the mosque of Cordova. But, on the whole, this type of structure is not common in the Maghrib. The honey-comb design of the ceiling was probably imported to Sicily directly from the Orient in the 1120s, before it gained acceptance in North Africa. In the eastern part of the ceiling one finds the lower plane of the beams decorated with a series of rosettes which resemble the stuccos at Samarra. A number of other decorative motifs in the ceiling can also be ultimately traced to the designs at that 'Abbāsid capital'.<sup>23</sup>

Some of the Arabic decorative inscriptions in the ceiling can



be traced to the Fāṭimid style. Altogether four kinds of scripts can be distinguished in these inscriptions of the Palatine Chapel: *naskh*, Fāṭimid Kufic, a heavier Kufic with larger letters and another script with subtle and intertwined strokes.<sup>24</sup>

Of the original paintings of the ceiling by Arab artists some have not survived. Others have been completely repainted in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and some of the surviving paintings have been much damaged. Yet, altogether enough of the work of Arab artists and mural decorators remains to give us a clear impression of their art and technique. These paintings of the ceiling of the Palatine Chapel belong to the Fāṭimid school in Egypt. This tradition in Egypt dates back to the Ṭūlūnids. A lively school of painting flourished under the Fāṭimids.<sup>25</sup> This Fāṭimid tradition has, in turn, been influenced by the style of Samarra, which to a considerable extent is a manifestation of Asian Hellenism strongly influenced by Sassanid forms.<sup>26</sup>

The iconography of these paintings has been analysed in detail by Monneret de Villard.<sup>27</sup> The iconographical material of the paintings in the Palatine Chapel is rich, but not unduly so. Many figures are repeated. The purely decorative nature of these paintings is in the Islamic tradition, and stands in absolute contrast to the Christian mural iconography. The painters of the Palatine Chapel ceiling seem to be fond of depicting animals, especially birds. Often the bird holds a leaf in its beak, a Sassanid motif. The bird most represented is the peacock, reflecting a confluence of the 'Abbāsīd and the Byzantine traditions. In the representation of birds one finds the same motifs as in Islamic minor arts and textiles. Among animals, the lion is represented most often, sometimes struggling with a serpent. Another motif is a falcon attacking an animal such as a hare or an antelope; this is a Persian motif dating back to Achaemenid times. Of the trees, the palm is depicted most often and is stylised.

Human representations on the ceiling of the Palatine Chapel are mostly convivial figures. Some wear Muslim head-gear such as a turban or a crown (*tāj*) with three points. Musicians are depicted with musical instruments common in the Muslim world. There are also female dancers. The dancing figures of the Palatine Chapel are traceable to the tradition of Samarra,

and eventually that of the Sassanids. On the whole these dancing figures give a better impression of frozen movement than their counterparts in the earlier Islamic art. There are wrestling scenes, human figures carving an animal like a gazelle or a peacock, and falconers. An interesting figure is that of a man eating in the European style with the food being served to him by servants. There are numerous other human representations that throw some light on the daily life of Normans, Arabs and others in Norman Sicily.

Another category of representations in the Palatine Chapel consists of mythical creatures such as two sphinxes with the bodies of lions and heads of women, griffons, mermaids and harpies. The cavalier fighting a dragon may or may not be a European motif, as it is also found in earlier Islamic art.

These paintings do not give the impression of an organic iconographic conception. They are dispersed over the surface according to the arbitrary pleasure of the artists; and there is considerable individuality in the styles of these unknown painters. Monneret de Villard suggests these artists can be divided into various groups, decorators, painters of animal figures who have much in common with the textile artist, and painters of human figures whose work is two-dimensional in effect.<sup>28</sup>

Through Italian commercial cities like Genoa, Pisa and Venice Islamic motifs came to be introduced into Italian painting, especially in the early specimens of the Sienese school and in Tuscan art. Giotto, Fra Angelico and Fra Lippo used Arabic or pseudo-Arabic characters for ornament in their paintings. This motif came to be known in Italy probably through the import of oriental silk, lamps and brass-vessels.<sup>29</sup>

Monneret de Villard doubts the existence of Arab *ṭirāz* for the manufacture of rich textile under the Normans, and regards the industry as of Byzantine origin;<sup>30</sup> but Roger II's mantle, still preserved in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna is not the only surviving evidence of the Norman-Arab *ṭirāz*. A white silk gown of William II has also survived which is decorated with a large fringe of purple and gold woven with a bilingual inscription in Latin and Arabic, giving the titles of William II and the year 1181.<sup>31</sup> It will not be wrong to conclude that the Italian weavers gained their knowledge of



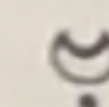
the manufacture of rich silk cloth and of its designs from the Norman-Arab workshops which almost certainly existed. No doubt this Arab tradition came to be synthesised with the Byzantine, especially after 1147 when Greek weavers were captured during the Norman raids in the Aegean sea and brought to Sicily. By the beginning of the thirteenth century silk-weaving had become a major industry in several Italian cities.<sup>32</sup>

Cott has observed similarities between the designs, techniques and colours of Norman-Arab textiles and those of the Siculo-Arab ivories produced by Arab craftsmen in twelfth-century Norman Sicily. The majority of these ivories are in the form of coffers (*cofanetti*), caskets or bridal chests, and have been preserved in various European churches. These in turn influenced another group of ivories made in northern Italy during the late thirteenth century, which have a more Gothic character.

The ivory caskets are of rectangular or other forms with hinged covers of flat or truncated pyramidal shape. The larger ones consist of thin plaques of ivory fastened to a wooden core; the very small ones are of pure ivory without wood. Another frequent category of these ivories is that of cylindrical boxes, each made of a single piece of ivory without a wooden core; the bottom and the lid being separate ivory pieces. The technique of the colours as well as the repertory of decorated motifs and designs has much in common with the motifs and designs and colours of the ceiling of the Palatine Chapel.<sup>33</sup> The decorative tendency of the ivories is symmetrical and highly stylised, only a few being realistic in representation. Some of them have abstract and geometrical designs and are 'ornamented with tiny, isolated motifs composed of incised, dotted circles or concentric circles'. Motifs are floral, animal and human, the latter category including representations of hunting, court life and figures of Christian saints.<sup>34</sup>

## EPILOGUE

## LUCERA



Deported from Sicily, the last few thousand Sicilian Muslims survived for some decades in their colony at Lucera on the Apulian tableland. Here, they were mainly occupied with agriculture to earn their livelihood. Once they had ceased to be rebels, they were recruited in Frederick II's army. A contingent of these Muslims from Lucera accompanied him on the Crusade. The immense fortress Frederick had built at Lucera was manned by the Muslims. They were also employed as crossbowmen. Muslim craftsmen forged weapons and manufactured poisoned arrows for the use of the emperor's troops in his wars in Christendom. In the castle at Lucera there was a part of the imperial treasury, and the emperor's Arab dancing girls. Frederick resisted all ecclesiastical pressure to force conversion to Christianity on the Muslims of Lucera.<sup>1</sup>

Lucera was a small island of Arab identity with all around a sea of Italian influences and pressures. Yet even after the Hohenstaufens under Angevin rule something of Arab culture survived there. A document<sup>2</sup> has been preserved with the Arabic colophon of one Riccardo of Lucera who, despite a Christian name, was probably still a Muslim and as late as 1272 was given the position of *miles* (a police functionary) at Lucera. His name also occurs in other documents relating to the use of the Arab troops of Lucera. Later on, in disfavour with Charles II of Anjou, his goods were confiscated and he was cast into prison where he died in 1289. His two sons Hājāj and 'Alī had Muslim names. This document is of interest as showing that almost until the end of the colony at Lucera, the Arabs could write their own language; and among themselves they almost certainly spoke it, in spite of their long isolation from the world of Islam.



The aim of Angevin policy, however, was the Christianisation of the Muslims of Lucera, first through persuasion and some coercion, and finally by compulsion. The Muslims who were converted to Christianity were given positions of trust, even though they retained to some extent their Arab identity. Thus in 1293 one Giovanni Sarraceno was appointed custodian of the port of Manfredonia.<sup>3</sup> Raymond Lull's visit to Lucera in 1294 was sponsored and actively encouraged by Charles II of Anjou, whose order to Henry Girard, the custodian of Lucera, read: 'When the distinguished man, Raymond Lull, comes to the above-mentioned region of Lucera, to confer with the Saracens of Lucera about the Catholic faith, he does so with our permission and knowledge, and we enjoin upon you, illustrious sir, in an emphatic way both strongly and urgently, since the above mentioned Master Raymond has been properly commissioned for these matters, that you offer him for his examination of these things mentioned above, as often as there shall be need, your good-will, help and timely advice.'<sup>4</sup>

Finally the Arab colony of Lucera was destroyed by the order of Charles II of Anjou between 15 and 24 August 1300. The Muslims of Lucera were forcibly converted to Christianity;<sup>5</sup> and the Islamic presence in Sicily and Italy ceased to exist completely.

## ABBREVIATIONS



*B.a.s.* = M. Amari (ed.), *Biblioteca arabo-sicula*

*Centenario* = *Centenario della nascita di Michele Amari*

*CHI* = *Cambridge History of Islam*

*CMH* = *Cambridge Medieval History*

*EI* = *Encyclopaedia of Islam*

*RSO* = *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*

*SI* = *Studia Islamica*

*SMS* = M. Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*

*ZDMG* = *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*



## NOTES

### Chapter One

1. SMS, i. 232f.
2. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, 235; Ibn-Abī-Dīnār, *Kitāb al-Mu'nis*, Anno 33 in *B.a.s.*, It. tr., ii. 273-4; Ibn-'Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, Anno 33, in *B.a.s.*, ii. 1.
3. A. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les arabes*, Brussels 1935, 62.
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5. Rizzitano, *EI<sup>2</sup>*, iii. 970.
6. Qādī 'Iyād, *Tartīb al-madārik* in *Centenario*, i. 381.
7. Zarkashī in *B.a.s.*, Ar. t., 522; also Ibn-Khallikān, ii. 216, 287; Ḥajjī Khalifa, i. 374; Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-muqaffā* in *B.a.s.*, Ar. t., 665; Fagnan in *Centenario*, ii. 92.
8. Sam'ānī, *Kitāb al-ansāb*, 354.
9. Ibn-Bashkuwāl in *B.a.s.*, It. tr., ii. 427-8.
10. Rizzitano in *EI<sup>2</sup>*, iii. 859-60.
11. Yāqūt (ed. Wüstenfeld), iii. 237.
12. For instance al-'Umārī, *Masālik al-abṣār*, extract in *B.a.s.*, It. tr., i. 256.
13. *Nuḥ'hat al-mushtāq*, extracts in *B.a.s.*, It. tr., i. 35-42.
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15. *SMS*, iii/2, 469.
16. az-Zawzānī, *Ta'rikh al-ḥukamā'*, in *B.a.s.*, Ar. t., 619; It. tr., ii. 503.
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18. U. Rizzitano, 'Notizie bio-bibliografiche su Ibn Qaṭṭā' li "siciliano"', *Atti dell' Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, ix/5-6 (1954), 260-94; idem 'Ibn al-Qaṭṭā', *EI<sup>2</sup>*, iii. 818-19.
19. Text published with Italian translation in U. Rizzitano, 'Un Compendio dell' Antologia di poeti arabo-siciliani', *Atti dell' Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Memorie*, viii (1958), 335-79; also I. D. Matteo, 'Antologia di poeti arabi siciliani estratta da quella di Ibn Qaṭṭā', *Archivio Storico per la Sicilia*, i (1953), 85-133.
20. 'Imād al-Iṣfahānī, iv/1, 51-5; 410.

21. U. Rizzitano, 'Un Commento di Ibn al-Qaṭṭā' "il siciliano" ad alcuni Versi di al-Mutanabbī', *RSO*, xxx (1955), 207-27.
22. Ḥajjī Khalifa, iv. 146; iii. 595.
23. *B.a.s.*, Ar. t., 587.
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31. F. Gabrieli, 'Il palazzo ḥammādita di Biḡāya descritto da Ibn Ḥamdis', *Aus der Welt der Islamischen Kunst, Festschrift für Ernst Kühnel*, Berlin 1959, 54-8; idem, 'Corrélations entre la littérature et l'art dans la civilisation musulmane', G. E. von Grunbaum (ed.), *Classicisme et déclin culturel dans l'histoire de l'Islam*, Paris 1957, 55-7.
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33. *Ibid.*, iv/1, 24-5.
34. *Ibid.*, iv/1, 21.
35. *Ibid.*, iv/1, 48-9.
36. U. Rizzitano, 'Ibn Qalākīs', *EI<sup>2</sup>*, iii. 814-15; Iḥsān 'Abbās, *al-'Arab fī Ṣiqilliyya*, 287-95.
37. 'Imād al-Iṣfahānī, iv/1, 17-18.

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2. F. Gabrieli, 'Frederick II and Muslim Culture', *East and West*, (1958), 53.
3. Georgina Masson, *Frederick II of Hohenstaufen*, London 1957, 32.
4. *SMS*, iii/2, 604-8.
5. He should not be confused with the earlier Ibn-'Abbād who fought against Roger I; the later Ibn-'Abbād was probably not a Sicilian, but an immigrant from Tunis. (Gabrieli in *East and West*, 55.)



6. E. Lévi-Provençal, 'Une héroïne de la résistance musulmane en Sicile au début du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Oriente Moderno*, 34 (1954), 283-8.
7. Masson, 135-45.
8. Gabrieli in *East and West*, 53; Masson, 128.
9. Haskins, 252; Curtis, 450.
10. Gabrieli in *East and West*, 54.
11. Masson, 250.
12. Abū-l-Faḍā'il al-Ḥamawī, *Ta'rikh al-Manṣūrī*, ed. P. A. Gryaznevic, Moscow 1960, ff 166<sup>b</sup>-170<sup>b</sup>; Bernard Lewis, 'Assassins of Syria and Ismā'īlis of Persia', *Atti del convegno internazionale sul tema La Persia nel medioevo*, Rome 1971, 575-6.
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15. *SMS*, iii/2, 627-29; Mack Smith, 59.
16. Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, iii. 520; iv. 268, 567 and *passim*; Haskins, *Medieval Science*, 252.
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6. *Ibid.*, 253; Gabrieli in *East and West*, 58.
7. De Stefano, 28; Haskins, *Renaissance*, 284.
8. Huillard Bréholles, *Historia Diplomatica Frederici II*, Paris 1859, ii. 158; v. 726.
9. De Stefano, 44-5.
10. *Ibid.*, 62-3.
11. Masson, 224-5.
12. De Stefano, 20, 27.
13. Haskins, *Medieval Science*, 246-8; *SMS*, iii. 692-5; De Stefano, 41-3.
14. G. Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, Baltimore 1927-1948, ii. 565-6.

15. Huillard Bréholles, *op. cit.*, Intr. p. xxvii.
16. Gabrieli in *CHI*, ii. 861-2.
17. M. Amari, 'Questions philosophiques adressées aux savants musulmans par l'Empereur Frédéric II', *Journal Asiatique*, serie 5<sup>e</sup>, i (1853), 240-6; M. A. F. Mehren, 'Correspondence du Philosophe soufi Ibn Sab'in 'Abd oul-Ḥaqq avec l'Empereur Frédéric II de Hohenstaufen', *Journal Asiatique*, xiv (1879), 341-454; A. Faure in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, iii. 921-2; Masson, 237; De Stefano, 91-126; L. Massignon, 'Ibn Sab'in et la critique psychologique dans l'histoire de la philosophie musulmane', *Mémorial Henri Basset*, Paris 1928, ii. 123-30; *idem*, *Recueil de textes inédits relatifs à la mystique en pays de l'Islam*, Paris 1929, 123-34; *idem*, 'Ibn Sab'in et la "conspiration ḥallāgienne" en Andalousie et en Orient au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Études d'Orientalisme dédiées à la mémoire de Lévi-Provençal*, Paris 1962, ii. 661-82.
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29. E. Cerulli, *Il Libro della Scala e la Questione delle Fonti arabo-spagnole della Divina Commedia*, Vatican City 1949, 519.
30. *Convito*, ii. 6, 14; iii. 2; iv. 21.
31. *Convito*, ii. 15.
32. *Purgatorio*, xxv. 62-6; *Convito*, iv. 13; *De Monarchia*, i. 4, etc; cf. Cerulli, 513.
33. Cerulli, 519-21; M. Th. d'Alverny, 'Les pérégrinations de l'âme dans l'autre monde d'après un anonyme de la fin du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, xiii (1940-2), 239-300.
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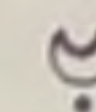
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*The Arabic article al-, with its variants, an-, ash-, etc, is neglected in the alphabetical arrangement*

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